



charged with conspiracy. And despite the prosecution's failure to produce any hard evidence linking them to the crime, four of the "Chicago anarchists" were eventually hanged, a fifth committed suicide in prison, and the other three received long prison terms. Behind this miscarriage of justice, Avrich finds, was a widespread fear of nefarious "continental" influences—both of radical European ideas and of the immigrants who brought them to America (five of the defendants were German-born). Anarchism not only challenged Americans' right to property ownership; it called forth the specter of the Paris Commune of 1871, a bloody uprising that briefly threatened France's bourgeois order. Some prominent Americans supported the anarchists, including novelist William Dean Howells, who called the execution "civic murder." Too late for most of the eight men, they were officially exonerated by Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld in 1893.

Arts & Letters

HEROES ARE GRAZING IN MY GARDEN

by Heberto Padilla
Farrar, 1984
250 pp. \$16.95

Fidel Castro's Cuba has not been kind to the artists and writers it once courted. The career of poet Heberto Padilla is a case in point. Recipient of an award from the Cuban Writers Union in 1969, he was jailed two years later, forced to recant his liberal political views, and put under house arrest. Padilla's disenchantment comes through strongly in this novel about two Cuban intellectuals, Julio and Gregorio, both victims of the revolution they once supported. The daily betrayals of the revolutionary ideal by Castro and his inner circle have embittered Gregorio, a writer of great promise; he has taken to the bottle to forget his failing marriage and his inability to write the great Cuban novel. Julio's outspoken criticism of Castro has left him in reduced circumstances: Once a respected intellectual in the Communist Party, he now works as a tour guide and translator. The heart of the novel is the imaginary escapes the

two men fashion for themselves: Gregorio's fantasies focus on a past stay in Moscow; Julio imagines mythical dialogues with Castro, Karl Marx, and Herbert Marcuse. Appropriately, perhaps, for a novel about lost illusions, there is no real conclusion. As Padilla, who finished the novel before coming to the United States in 1980, explains in the afterword: "Everything written in a suffocating political atmosphere is inconclusive and fragmentary."

**PRODUCTS OF THE
PERFECTED
CIVILIZATION:
Selected Writings
of Chamfort**

translated by W. S. Merwin
North Point, 1984
284 pp. \$12.50

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, generally parsimonious with praise, found nothing but good to say of the 18th-century French aphorist Sébastien-Roch Nicolas Chamfort: Without his "tragic spirit" and "sting," wrote Nietzsche, the French Revolution "would be considered a far more stupid event, and would not exert its present seductive fascination." Of uncertain parentage, Chamfort (1740?-94) was brought, at about the age of five, from the province of Auvergne to Paris and enrolled in a Catholic school for the poor. Trained for the clergy, the young man announced to the principal of his college that his distaste for "bickering, hypocrisy, honors, and money" made him unfit for the priesthood. His wit and his pen quickly won him a place as a journalist, a maker of light comedies, and a luminary in Parisian salons. He was a supporter of the 1789 Revolution, but his deep pessimism about human nature prepared him for its bloody failure. Poet Merwin preserves the Gallic economy and bite of Chamfort's posthumously collected maxims; he also offers a representative sampling of topics, from fashion ("The changing of fashion is the tax that the industry of the poor levies upon the vanity of the rich"), to social inequality ("Society is made up of two great classes: those who have more dinner than appetite, and those who have more appetite than dinners"), to psychology ("All of the passions lead to exaggeration. That is why they are passions"). Merwin's biographical introduction serves as a nice apéritif.