

deavor to cope imaginatively with the sudden yet inevitable "appearance of the Machine in the Garden" leads to a "complex, distinctively American form of romantic pastoralism." Mr. Marx traces various expressions of this pastoralism in the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Melville, and Frank Norris. His readings are acute, but again the ground has been rather thoroughly gone over.

IT is in the epilogue that the argument becomes urgent and personal. Mr. Marx contends that the Garden is now rank with weeds, that "our inherited symbols of order and beauty have been divested of meaning." The realities of a mass-consumer technocracy, of a society organized along industrial and scientific lines, do not accord with the reiterated ideal of a pastoral, prelapsarian state of grace. Too many classics of the American imagination end with the hero destroyed or "totally alienated from society, alone and powerless, like the evicted shepherd of Virgil's eclogue." The dream of Eden has turned febrile. In a fascinating coda, Mr. Marx suggests that "new symbols of possibility" must be created, but that such creation belongs, ultimately, not to art but to politics.

A good deal of Mr. Marx's evidence is available elsewhere, and the urbanity of his style leads to padding. A shorter book might have been more arresting. Yet at the same time, there are surprising omissions. Nothing is said, for example, of the murderous exclusion of the Indian from the Garden. How was the pastoral ideal reconciled to the apparently inevitable corollary of human destruction? Are the archetypal patterns of the "Western" a direct consequence or a sublimation of hypocrisy? Here Edmund Wilson is the shrewder guide. Nor does Mr. Marx deal with the neoclassic, often explicitly Virgilian and Horatian agrarianism of the Fugitive poets and critics of the 1930's and 1940's, which suggests a vital affinity between pastoralism and political reaction. These are harsh, uncomfortable topics. Neither fits easily into a book that is conceived, perhaps too deliberately, as a conversation among friends.



Curiouser And Curiouser

BARBARA CARTER

THE STRANGE TACTICS OF EXTREMISM, by Harry and Bonaro Overstreet. Norton. \$4.50. Paperback, \$0.95.

There was once an exercise devised for would-be artists—paint a white egg lying on a white saucer placed upon a white tablecloth. And another for would-be writers—describe at length a bore without becoming a bore. The trouble was that no matter how much one admired the effort, one could not rejoice in the result. Evidently the extremists pose a similar problem, or so it seems from Harry and Bonaro Overstreet's new book.

This is really a shame. For the extremists, perversely enough, have taken courage from the election and would have us believe their star is now indisputably on the rise. How should one deal with them? The Overstreets take them very, very seriously, and as a consequence have gone to an extraordinary amount of work. They patiently explain the fallacies in their arguments, carefully point out the broad contradictions in their stand, solemnly question their use of unnamed experts. Although they do not take up all the extremists, the ones they choose, Robert Welch and the John Birch Society, Myers Loman and the Circuit Riders, Edgar Bundy and the Church League of America, Billy James Hargis and his Christian Crusade, Carl McIntire and the American Council of Christian Churches, and Dan Smoot, are more than enough.

They are, in fact, too much for this kind of treatment. Chapter

by chapter, their charges are too wild, and the Overstreets' lessons in logic or history too elementary, to do anything but encourage the lassitude or despair that fast sets in.

Still, this book may well prove useful to local groups like the PTA, for instance, that are frequently selected for "infiltration" by the far Right. It gives enough background information for those who are new to the game to make it easier to identify the extremists and what they are after, and even gives hints on how to deal with troublemakers. The facts the Overstreets have patiently garnered to counter the extremists' charges of conspiracy in high places may prove useful on occasion, too, but for every charge that is answered, a new one is sure to appear. And for those who want to believe the worst, to whom this book at times seems dedicated, logic is absolutely no help.

PERHAPS the Overstreets have been too diligent in their research. For several years, they have analyzed all the extremist literature they could lay their hands on—a sacrifice beyond the courage of most, and certainly beyond the extremists themselves, who, it may be safely assumed, pay little heed to their own outpourings.

Thus it should be a matter of sympathy if too much familiarity with the strange tactics of the extremists has affected the Overstreets themselves. But what else are we to make of the suggestion that each and every one of us read Welch's *Blue Book* with close attention and in its entirety, as we should have read *Mein Kampf*? Or of the Overstreets' confession, in this day of educational turmoil, that their "basic concern about today's schooling" is that "young people are not being required to memorize enough of the great words of our tradition" such as the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address? Even curiouser, to counteract the rightists, they propose that liberals and conservatives get together in "something as informal as the Caucus Race in *Alice in Wonderland*: that race in which everyone started from where he was, and ran as fast and far as he could; and in which all got prizes." That's a pack of cards that would have nothing on *Alice*.



The Libretto As Literature

FREDERIC V. GRUNFELD

NEXT to the soprano's husband, it is the librettist who has the most thankless position at the opera house. If his work is a success, the composer gets the credit; if it fails, the librettist can take the blame. In either event, monuments to librettists are scarce. In Paris there is a street behind the Opéra named for the author of Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, Eugène Scribe, but I know of no city that has done as much for Lorenzo Da Ponte, librettist of the three loveliest operas in existence—*Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Così fan tutte*.

For this and sundry other services, the opera world owes Lorenzo Da Ponte at least three life-size monuments in Carrara marble: one in Venice, from which he was legally banished as a young man; one in front of the Staatsoper in Vienna, from which he was expelled at forty-two; and one in New York City, where he spent most of the last thirty years of his life. He died in 1838, aged eighty-nine, in a house at No. 91 Spring Street on the corner of Broadway, but no memorial tablet marks the spot. He was buried in a cemetery over on Eleventh Street and Avenue A, and there his bones were just as irretrievably lost as those of his friend Mozart at St. Marx's graveyard in Vienna. The citizens of Vienna have at least tried to make amends for past errors by putting up plaques on all the houses of which it could be said that Mozart had slept there. New York, on the other hand, doesn't even have a

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