

and starts, given new life to a moribund society and drawn China into the world economy.

Reform began shakily, as revolutionary Maoists, the Gang of Four, sought to preserve the most radical of the Great Helmsman's policies. They were arrested in October 1976 and replaced by moderate Hua Guofeng. His lackluster interregnum, dedicated to restoring order to the nation, ended in late 1978, and the "reform" faction of Deng Xiaoping took over.

At 78, Deng, himself a survivor of the Cultural Revolution, was a confident, seasoned politician, committed to China's reconstruction and entry into the global community. Moreover, he had a practical program and a vast network of supporters. His wide-reaching reforms—including the development of a mixed economy, the encouragement of broader decision-making, and freer discussions of ideology—have been the grist for much recent China scholarship. Harding, however, provides a valuable perspective by focusing on Deng's political strategy: Limiting liberalization, the PRC leader has controlled the speed and scope of change. Harding believes that "China will move slowly, even haltingly, toward a more open-market-oriented economy and a more relaxed and consultative political system."

Arts and Letters

NEW YORK 1930: Architecture and Urbanism between the Two World Wars

by Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory
Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins
Rizzoli, 1987
847 pp. \$75



By 1930, New York presented a quintessentially American face to the world. As the country's principal port of entry between the great wars, "The City" had transformed itself from a collection of brownstones and gingerbread public buildings to a "skyscraper Babylon"—vertical, and monumentally practical. Its architects had imbibed the neo-classical style of the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs (or Art Deco) and the modernism of the Bauhaus glass-and-steel box, but their work was peculiarly American: Rockefeller Center, the Empire State Building, and the Chrysler Building are all structures that reflect notions of "commerce and convenience" more than any particular theory of art.

In 1916 a new zoning law introduced urban planning and set the "fixed formula for tower setbacks" that was to become the epitome of the New York style. Growing upward, the city's sky-

scrapers concentrated humanity as never before, with a resulting vitality and congestion of unprecedented dimensions. Even Baltimore's H. L. Mencken, convinced that Americans are driven by "a positive libido for ugliness," had to admit that "the life of the city . . . is as interesting as its physical aspect is dull."

Although richly illustrated, *New York 1930* is no fluffy coffee-table book. Architects Stern and Gilmartin and writer Mellins have considered not only stone and steel but also song, film, painting, and print to argue that New York was American culture distilled.

**BEETHOVEN
REMEMBERED:
The Biographical Notes
of Franz Wegeler and
Ferdinand Ries**

translated by Frederick Noonan
Great Ocean, 1987
200 pp. \$16.95

**THE CHANGING IMAGE
OF BEETHOVEN:**

A Study in Mythmaking
by Alessandra Comini
Rizzoli, 1987
480 pp. \$45

"Yet, why should Beethoven's features look like his scores?" asked Ludwig Rellstab, a Berlin music critic, after meeting the great composer in 1825 and discovering that his features were, if anything, "lacking in significance."

If the temptation to view Beethoven as a romantic hero was great during his lifetime (1770-1827), it grew even greater during the century after his death. Comini, an art historian at Southern Methodist University, shows how the mythologizing of Beethoven mirrored the broader cultural projects of his various mythologizers, including composer Richard Wagner and fin-de-siècle Viennese painter Gustav Klimt. Comini's sprawling commentary on the various paeans to Beethoven—in prose, in paint, or in music—leave the reader convinced that he has served as a genius for all seasons.

But who was the man? An affectionate but believable portrait of Beethoven emerges in the biographical "notes" by his friends Wegeler and Ries, available now in this first full English translation. The man who emerges here is temperamental, even suspicious, yet, withal, kindhearted. Wegeler, a physician and university rector, cites letters in which Beethoven unfairly lashes out at friends, but notes that he "always apologized for much more than he was guilty of." In keeping with a popular image, Beethoven was, as protégé and composer Ries reports, "a stranger to the rules of etiquette," and often "embarrassed the entourage of Archduke Rudolph when he first started to frequent that circle." Ries expands on his bungling awkwardness: "No piece of furniture was safe

