

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



from him, least of all anything valuable." With the onset of infirmity, Beethoven began to seclude himself from the company of strangers, adding to his image as an isolated genius. But he did not relish solitude. In a letter dated June 29, 1800, he confided to Wegeler: "for almost two years I have avoided all society, because I cannot say to people: I am deaf."

THE HAW LANTERN

by Seamus Heaney
Farrar, 1987
52 pp. \$12.95

In "From the Frontier of Writing," Heaney describes the sensation of driving through a British checkpoint in his native Northern Ireland. He goes on to relate this feeling of exposure, where "everything is pure interrogation," to what he experiences when writing poetry: Struggling with words, he senses the presence of his readers, as unrelentingly watchful as the "posted soldiers flowing and receding/like tree shadows into the polished wind-screen." The feeling of release is not complete; the poet is "arraigned yet freed . . ." when he finishes. Throughout this collection, Ireland's leading bard, one of the foremost poets writing in English today, offers what he calls in the title poem, "The Haw Lantern," a "small light for small people." But if these 31 intimate poems do not blind "with illumination," if they resist the stage of public pronouncement, they achieve exactness, the formally precise expression of home truths. Of his own poetic endeavor, Heaney observes: "I come from scraggy farm and moss/Old patchworks that the pitch and toss/Of history have left dishevelled./But here, for your sake, I have levelled/My cart-track voice to garden tones,/ Cobbled the bog with Cotswold stones . . ."

PRIVATE DOMAIN:

An Autobiography
by Paul Taylor
Knopf, 1987
371 pp. \$22.95

During the 1950s, New York was the center of dance. There, 30 years after Isadora Duncan shocked Paris by appearing ungirt and barefoot, Martha Graham worked out a technique for modern dance. At the same time, choreographer George Balanchine was stretching the vocabulary of traditional ballet while retaining its formal symmetry and rigorous technique.

In 1952 Graham spotted the virtually untrained Taylor at Connecticut College's summer ballet school. Three years later, he joined her company.