

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

In: Tomorrow.

Beethoven: Life of a Conqueror. By Emil Ludwig.

Mann, Klaus

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It is to the elaboration of his main theme of winning assent for those principles — a basic change of productive relations within each society, and joint action without, by states, to develop effective consumption-demand in the backward areas — that he subordinates his treatment of communism and fascism, revolution and counter-revolution. He writes an unvarnished evaluation of the magnificent achievements of the Russian revolution, and the heavy price that the Russians paid for the blessings of security. He has a brilliant comparison of the psychological affinity of the Russian Communist and the seventeenth-century militant Puritan. Not less admirable, perhaps the most valuable single section, is his interpretation of recent German history and the character of the German people — an interpretation made notable by his humane generosity and his astringent reflections on the British variant of Nazi racism. Even his sharpest condemnation of individuals, like the utterly frank statement of the limitation of Churchill's social vision, attain by reason of his scrupulous fairness a kind of majestic, if illusive, dignity, as though not he but impartial history itself were passing judgment on the great leader whom otherwise he lauds without stint.

But all this is secondary to his great purpose, the defense and illustration of the values of civilization, over which hangs pitilessly the black cloud of counter-revolution.

The Viking Press, \$3.50

PERSON, PLACE AND THING

By Karl Jay Shapiro

A FIRST BOOK OF POETRY may always be expected to contain many flaws of technique and conception, for in it the young poet is usually just learning to walk with words and unexpressed experiences. When a first book is without these flaws — or at least has very few of them — it is indeed a rare event. Such an event is Karl Shapiro's book.

Shapiro's verse is composed of the stuff of everyday living — the corner drugstore, the thoughts of a lonely boy in an attic looking down on a city street, the reports in newspapers, a waitress in a restaurant. And the poet's reactions range all the way from an acid and seemingly detached irony to sheer lyrical sensitiveness.

Throughout all the satirical poems, however, runs a thread of pity, for either the object of the poem, as in "Waitress," or the victim (by inference) of the object, as in "Hospital, Drugstore" and many others. Which is to say that Karl Shapiro is a sentimentalist, but one with such control of his feelings, and of the means for expressing them, that whatever he says bites deep and leaves a wound. These are poems of our time and generation — the author himself is now serving with the armed forces in Australia — and by direct criticism and through the poet's commentary on his own personal thoughts they form an intense, a startling, record, which should be read and reread and then read again.

LLOYD MALLAN.

Reynal & Hitchcock, \$2

BEETHOVEN: Life of a Conqueror

By Emil Ludwig

Reviewed by Klaus Mann

EMIL LUDWIG's *Beethoven* is not a journalistic improvisation — as were his somewhat flimsy essays on Roosevelt, Stalin, Mussolini, and other celebrities — but the product of conscientious study and a lifelong love. Without doubt, Mr. Ludwig is sincere in assuring us that he has found in Beethoven's music "the greatest consolation for man's spirit," and in saying that there is no other genius, except Goethe, to whom he feels so deeply and essentially indebted. His biography of the great composer — succeeding a shorter Beethoven portrait included in *Three Titans* (1930) — testifies with impressive eloquence to the authenticity of his gratitude.

The subtitle of the book — "Life of a Conqueror" — discloses the essence of Ludwig's interpretation of Beethoven: he conceives of him as a Promethean, not to say Napoleonic, figure, whose predominant feature is a demoniac will for power and fame; an irritable giant harassed and inspired by his terrific ambition and his vulnerable pride. He shows us a Beethoven who, when the talk was of the King of Prussia, said, without any hesitation, "I, too, am a king"; a regal, if haunted, nature to whom the ideal of freedom meant primarily his own independence; a spirited fighter "whose life was a chain of victories over every obstacle."

Is Beethoven "anti-tragic," as Ludwig chooses to call him? It seems questionable whether this term can be applied to a basically tragic character — even if this character is dynamic enough to triumph "over everything, including tragedy." Ludwig is at his best in dramatizing that constant struggle: both the petty difficulties of Beethoven's daily life and the profound conflicts of his artistic development. There are brilliant passages, poignant and concise, to be found here: for instance, those dealing with Beethoven's attitude toward money (bitterly experienced in poverty, he lived to become a "financial wizard," to use Mr. Ludwig's expression); or the pages about the complex relation between Beethoven and Goethe; or the movingly pathetic episode of Beethoven's belated effort to acquire a "son-and-heir" in the person of his mediocre nephew.

Ludwig's vision of the aging master is more suggestive and more powerful than his portrait of the striving youth. The Beethoven of the *Missa Solemnis*, the Ninth Symphony, and the last Quartets has never before been described so realistically and effectively. We see him wandering through the streets of Vienna; see him working and struggling, quarreling with his friends and servants, insulting his patrons and publishers; separated from the world by his deafness and the vast dimensions of his genius. Surrounded by a glacial solitude, he conceives the Ninth Symphony, that "monument to the reconciliation of all mankind"; tormented and tested by a merciless God, he soars to the uncanny height of his last Quartets, offering the listener "metaphysics instead of sounds." His isolated figure — not "anti-tragic," but tragically heroic — appears indeed akin to that of the imperial prisoner of St. Helena: