

ing principle of the book. For the most part, these passages are chosen from Ogai's authorial discussion of literature, history, philosophical questions, and human behavior. Passages in which characters act and speak for themselves, passages in which situations are presented without authorial comment are relatively few. Rimer discusses Ogai's work more as intellectual and spiritual autobiography than as the art and craft of writing fiction and drama. His main concern is to seek out the threads of intellectual and spiritual continuity and development in Ogai's works; from this point of view, works of minor artistic merit, such as *Ka no yō ni*, are given more significance than they have been accorded previously. If there is a weakness to the book, it is perhaps the format Rimer uses to present his subject, for in relegating the biography to the introductory chapter, he then loses the chance to relate the significance of the mundane facts of Ogai's life to his excellent discussion of Ogai's intellectual and spiritual development.

Ogai's present reputation is based mainly on his historical fiction and biography, written between 1912 and 1917, late in his life. The two most interesting problems facing any commentator on Ogai's works are to account for these late works in the context of Ogai's total outpourings, given the great differences in style and content between these and anything he had written previously, and then to comment on the author's intentions in writing these works, given their dense and seemingly non-interpretive style of writing. Most critics up to now have interpreted these works either as a sign of mental exhaustion or as a conscious rejection of late Meiji culture and modes of writing. Rimer, concurring with Johnson's earlier study of these two specific problems, gives a more convincing interpretation of these works as a continuing and consistent development from the earlier contemporary fiction and drama. While Rimer's argument is not as detailed, specific, or well articulated as Johnson's, it still is too complex to summarize easily. In essence, Rimer sees Ogai's intention not as seeking to establish personal roots in the Tokugawa age he was born in, as has often been claimed, but as abstracting from that age a set of universal standards by which to judge any man and any age, particularly himself and the age in which he lived. This is an interpretation Ogai suggests to us when he caricatures himself as a surveyor in his 1910-11 novel *Seinen*.

Rimer's book is both ambitious and modest. It is the first map to be drawn of a vast territory,

effectively showing the general layout of the land and the most efficient and convenient paths of communication between one major terminal and another. It does not give a good sense of the terrain of the land. This is the book's modesty: Because of its brevity and ambition, it cannot afford to dwell on specific textures of individual novels, or discuss contradictions that break down the theme of continuity. For example, Ogai's work completely lacks the more endearing quality of lyricism one finds in the novels of Toson and Soseki. Nor does he necessarily write about pleasant people, even when he seems to want to, as in the character Koizumi Jun'ichi in *Seinen*. The sense of ambivalence one feels so strongly in Ogai's characterizations is missing from Rimer's discussion, as is the very frequent sense of pedantry and name-dropping.

How is one to account for unpleasantness and idiosyncrasy in a spiritual biography? Or, for example, how does Rimer account for the lack of sexuality (or most any other motivating force) in the historical works, when it is such an obvious factor in the contemporary novels? (Who else, then or now, in Japanese literature has imagined discussing a man's unconscious attraction to a hermaphrodite, as Ogai did in *Kaijin*, 1911-13?) These and many other questions come to mind as we read through Rimer's book, but the fact that they occur to us does not detract from the book's value. On the contrary, they indicate the degree to which Rimer has been able to stimulate interest in his subject. There is truth in the contention that Ogai can finally be approached only in a series of monographs, but Rimer shows us that a general discussion and interpretation are also possible, desirable, and necessary.

ERIC J. GANGLOFF

The University of Chicago

Yeats and the Noh: With Two Plays for Dancers by Yeats and Two Noh Plays.
BY AKHTAR QAMBER. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1974. 161 pp. Notes, Appendix, Bibliography. \$8.95

On the whole, this is a disappointing book. The charm of the pages of explication in the fourth and fifth chapters scarcely compensates for the inadequacy of scholarship in the earlier chapters—which in turn destroys any value in the evaluative chapter at the end. It is a pity that Weatherhill's reader did not point out obvious howlers (making

Pound a Harvard man is only one of many). It is an even greater pity that no one pointed out the excellent Japanese studies of this subject area. For example, rather than follow Legouis and Cazamian's antiquated contrast between Irish and English concepts of drama (based on national characteristics), Ms. Qamber might have tested out Professor Shotaro Oshima's intriguing comparison of Irish and Japanese theatrical imagination in his 1965 book *W. B. Yeats and Japan*. Much Japanese scholarship is not easily available to foreign visitors like Ms. Qamber, since it is in Japanese; but Oshima's excellent book is in English, his research based not only on wide reading but also on his correspondence and visits with Yeats.

The six chapters of the Qamber book deal with symbolism, the Irish theatre, the noh theatre, Yeats's *Four Plays for Dancers*, the Red Branch cycle of Irish legends, and critical evaluation of Yeats as a dramatist. Much has been written, in many languages, on all these subjects; but in her text and bibliography Qamber reveals only a limited knowledge of these works. The weakest chapter is that on the noh, but other chapters have their problems. Her reliance, in the first chapter, on W. Y. Tindall's studies in modern literature—with special attention to symbolism and Yeats—reminded me of my own studies under Tindall; but that was years ago, and many important works have appeared since, some drastically changing our understanding of those subjects. The Irish literary movement is a fascinating subject, but Qamber's sketchy treatment reads like warmed-over lecture notes; and her bibliography is inadequate and outdated. On the Red Branch cycle, her one source seems to be Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*—a book Yeats admired, but it was not his only source for versions of the Cuchulain legend and interpretations of it. Excellent scholarly treatments of Yeats's use of Irish legends exist, but are not used or cited by Qamber. In the chapter on the noh, she relies almost exclusively on the views of Fenollosa and Pound, without ever examining the basis of their understandings.

She lists some scholars, but makes no use of their work. For example, she refers to Donald Keene, but never cites his work, and in her bibliography lists only a two- or three-page article in the *Columbia Forum*. Among the Frenchmen interested in noh she mentions Paul Claudel, but apparently knows nothing of the monumental work of Noel Péri, or later French scholars. As a

result, to take one example, she follows Pound's absurd notes on ghosts (*Aoi no Ue* and the Komachi plays) and remarks: "Since the Noh presupposes ancestor worship, it has many supernatural figures, usually ghosts. The difficulty with ghosts is that they evade character portrayal" (pp. 50–51). She follows Pound also in her misunderstanding of *Aoi no Ue*, writing on p. 57 of "the slow and insidious conquest by insanity in the play."

After some touristy twaddle about Japanese culture, she shows her ignorance of the text by regretting the lack of poetic description of scenes, thus overlooking the characteristic form, the *michiyuki*. Most irritating are the irrelevant comments, such as one about the singer's "guttural sounds of *g* and *gb* akin to those in Arabic and Urdu and which reminded me of the *aazan*, the Muslim call to prayer" (p. 54), followed by a lengthy description of the *musha'ira*—charming in itself, but so different in genre and purpose as to be quite irrelevant. On the serious, most basic level, these things add up to the inescapable conclusion that Ms. Qamber does not understand the noh play. That she obviously loves it is all well and good; but if she does not understand the structure, text, and function of the plays, how does she dare to write a book involving the subject?

Obviously this vitiates her last chapter, even though some interesting points are made. Like Pound—perhaps even more than Pound in this case—Yeats understood the noh form intuitively, and opened up an avenue of dramatic development in the West. He understood that the noh play, like Yuan drama and early Indian drama, is a genre that does not exist in the West. Poetic drama, for us, is usually a sort of versified play, a complex dramatic structure—plot, characterization, problem, the works—on which a verse exterior is imposed. The noh drama, which Yeats was intuitively striving to emulate, is a lyric drama in which one emotion or theme is introduced, made more intense by poetry, music, and dance, and then brought to a rapid close. Whether the form is to be attained ultimately on the stage or on film, or in some way still not worked out, is not as important as the fact that it is a form desperately needed in the West (and not just for a "secret society"); Yeats's plays for dancers are not just "brilliant spots (sports?) of eccentricity" but guideposts for future development. And some of Yeats's plays are still viable in the theatre: a performance of *At the Hawk's Well* I saw in

Kyoto several years ago was excellent theatre; and last year in Tokyo I saw a superb performance of *Purgatory* (not one of the four plays, but influenced by the noh form), which convinced me that Yeats is a dramatist of importance. Beyond that, one might ask, as Qamber does not, whether Mishima's *Modern Noh Plays* are a genuine development of the noh form.

(A minor point: why reprint these particular plays when Yeats's *Collected Plays* is still available, and Pound's noh plays are in paperback?)

ROY E. TEELE

The University of Texas at Austin

How to Wrap Five More Eggs: Traditional Japanese Packaging. BY HIDEYUKI OKA. New York & Tokyo: John Weatherhill, 1975. 215 pp. Plates. \$15.00

How to Wrap Five More Eggs is a book that deserves to be warmly received by students and admirers of Japanese culture. Following closely in the footsteps of the same author's much acclaimed earlier volume on traditional Japanese packaging, *How to Wrap Five Eggs*, this book is itself packaged in two forms: its almost identical twin, alike in all but name and outer design, is *Tsutsumu: An Introduction to an Exhibition of the Art of the Japanese Package*. *Five More Eggs* and *Tsutsumu* are actually the hard- and soft-cover editions of the catalog for an exhibition held at Japan House in New York in Spring 1975.

The book is divided into three parts: introduction, plates, and commentaries on the plates. In his introduction, Mr. Oka presents the history of his own interest in traditional Japanese packaging. He discusses the evolution of its forms, stressing both utilitarian origins and the deliberate development of packaging as an art. He also questions whether the tradition can survive today in the face of the influences of mass production and modern materials. "Once every aspect of Japanese life was imbued with the spirit that produced this art. Can we now condemn it to oblivion without even so much as a funeral hymn?" (pp. 7-8). He seems almost to concede the battle, asking, "Just what are these packages whose passing we lament?" (p. 8).

Far from being a requiem, what follows is a lyrical tribute to the simplicity and ingenuity of the Japanese creative spirit. Much credit for the overall visual effectiveness of the book is due to

the discerning eye of Michikazu Sakai. Mr. Sakai's photography presents the objects to good advantage, with an uncluttered directness that complements the simplicity of the objects themselves. The photography, like many of the objects, is not showy, but sometimes possesses a stunning visual virtuosity, as in the repetition of strings of dried persimmons or red peppers—notable studies in Japanese patterning that in themselves would not be out of place in an exhibition of modern art.

In the commentaries that follow the plates, the author's approach may be described as appreciative. Mr. Oka's delight in his subject matter is obvious. His comments are enthusiastic, conversational, and informative—describing for each object its provenance, usage, symbolic references, and relevant notes of historical interest. There are occasional laments; in describing a throwaway earthenware teapot (Plate 180), he cannot resist editorializing: "Regrettably, this humble container seems doomed to disappear, . . . for it is now frequently replaced with plastic imitations, uninviting though the idea of drinking tea from plastic may be."

Photographs and commentaries together illustrate the differences between the refinements of Kyoto taste, and the often more rustic appearance of packages from outlying regions. The collection of objects spans the range from rough but functional straw wrappers for dried fish, to self-consciously elegant packaging for gifts of sweets, intended to impress on a noteworthy occasion. In such instances, the package often not only enhances, but even supersedes the object contained within. This aesthetic consideration is deeply rooted within Japan's classical past. In Genji's day, the impact of a poem sent between two lovers was often decisively enhanced or diminished by the sender's artful choice of paper, folding technique, and accompanying seasonal sprig.

Perhaps most important for the Western reader, the book as a whole stimulates a heightened awareness of much that is close to the heart of traditional Japanese aesthetics: the use of natural materials in a way both truthful and yet recreated; the penetration of the importance of the visual into everyday life; an elevation and transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary; and an integration of form and function which, while not solely the property of Japanese art, is developed by the Japanese to a degree perhaps unsurpassed by any other artistic tradition.

One rejoices that there are so few defects in this