

YEATS

by Frank Tuohy
 Macmillan, 1976, 232 pp.
 \$17.95
 L of C 76-12608
 ISBN 0-02-620450-9

THE DRAMA OF W. B. YEATS: Irish Myth and the Japanese Nō

by Richard Taylor
 Yale, 1976, 247 pp. \$15
 L of C 75-43336
 ISBN 0-300-01904-1

W. B. YEATS AND THE IDEA OF A THEATRE: The Early Abbey Theatre in Theory and Practice

by James W. Flannery
 Yale, 1976, 404 pp. \$22.50
 L of C 74-29721
 ISBN 0-300-01773-1

New appraisals of W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) continue to come from the pens of biographers and critics. Frank Tuohy's handsomely illustrated *Yeats* differs markedly from the classic critical studies by Richard Ellman and A. Norman Jeffares. They focus on the poems—both as art and as revelation of Yeats's life. Tuohy, a successful novelist, concentrates on the man. The poetry is included, but secondarily, as a product of events in Yeats's artistic and political careers, loves, late marriage. He discusses Yeats's lifelong sense of isolation, his membership in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, his fascination with occult practices. Concise sketches of important people who influenced him further enliven this biography. Scholars may wince at the remark that "Walter Pater, who had chosen to write English as though it were a dead language, began to have a marked effect on Yeats's own prose style," but Tuohy's tone does make for easier understanding of dense information.

Taylor's and Flannery's books on Yeats as dramatist are offshoots of the recent critical reassessment of the plays as stage productions. (Earlier analyses treat them as literature.) Taylor stresses the problems of actual performance and the effects of Yeats's discovery of Japan's Nō theatre on his staging of Celtic myths; although he sees the last plays as "extensions and elaborations" of Nō, Taylor's chief contribution lies in revealing the Anglo-Irishman's mistaken notions of the Japanese forms (an appendix includes technical details of the Nō conventions).

Flannery covers dramatic theory, stage performances, the famous Fay brothers and Yeats's relations with them and other actors. He describes the practical difficulties the poet encountered in managing the Abbey Theatre at a time when it was an extension of Dublin's hectic political life. Despite its acknowledged debt to Francis Ferguson's *The Idea of a Theatre* and leftover dissertation baggage, this book supplants other analyses of the playwright's skills and most histories of the Abbey in its electric youth.