



CRANES AT DUSK by *Hisako Matsubara*. Doubleday, \$15.95. Although she lives in Cologne and writes in German, Ms. Matsubara was born in Japan and is, like the young heroine of her novel, the daughter of a Shinto priest. The story is set in Kyoto during and immediately after the Japanese surrender in 1945. At the age of ten Saya is confronted by a totally new society, with innovations ranging from a shortage of food to the charms of chewing gum and Christianity, and she takes the upheaval with more composure than the surrounding adults. Their confusions and alarms are described by the author with a dry irony that does not preclude sympathy for people trying to behave correctly while the world ends. The conclusion of the tale risks Dickensian sentimentality and evades it, a move requiring both skill and courage on the part of Ms. Matsubara.