

APPENDIX

Biography:

Kimitaka Hiraoka was born in Tokyo. Later he changed his name into Yukio Mishima so that his anti-literary father wouldn't know what he wrote. Azusa Hiroaka, Mishima's father, was a government official, while his mother Shizue was the daughter of a school principal in Tokyo. At the time of Mishima's birth, Mishima's parents were living with Jotaro and Natsuko Hiroaka, Mishima's paternal grandparents. Jotaro Hiroaka came from a family who had once been farmers, but he rose to be a senior level civil servant in the Japanese government. His wife, Natsuko Hiroaka, came from a family who had descended from samurais. Her paternal grandfather was a member of the aristocracy in Japan called a "daimyo".

The name Yukio can loosely be translated as "Man who chronicles reason."(<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/mishima.htm>). Mainly his paternal grandmother, who hardly allowed the boy out of her sight, raised Mishima. Mishima was taken in by his grandmother Natsu Nagai, the only family member of aristocratic samurai heritage. Natsu ruled Mishima's childhood with an uncompromising, overprotective hand. Spending practically all of his days alone in his room, Mishima was remarkably introverted and considered a "frail, girlish child." His parental grandmother gives big influence toward his life. It is also will influence almost all of his works in the future.

In 1968, Yukio Mishima has often been accused of being a right wing fanatic, but neither he or any other member of his private army were ever involved in any violence which is usually characteristic of most right wing organizations. In addition neither he nor any other member of the "Shield Society" were on the list of defiant groups monitored by the very careful Japanese police. Mishima and his followers took over a military base, held a high ranking Japanese general hostage, and excited the armed forces of his country to overthrow their democratically elected government, before ending his own life by ritual suicide (seppuku). Whatever it's true purpose, Mishima used "The Shield Society" to challenge his country to seriously reconsider the westernized direction that they were taking.

Yukio Mishima who is considered by many critics as the most important Japanese novelist of the 20th century, is prolific writer. He was three times nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature. As a writer Mishima drew inspiration from pre-modern literature, both Japanese and Western. Yukio Mishima was the most spectacularly talented young writer to emerge in Japan after world War II. Mishima completed his first novel the year he entered the University of Tokyo. Mishima's works include more than forty plays, over ninety short stories, several poetry and travel volumes and hundreds of essays modern Kabuki and Noh dramas. During World War II Mishima was excused military service, but he served in a factory. This plagued Mishima throughout his life - he had survived shamefully when so many others had been killed. After the war Mishima studied law at Tokyo University. Shortly before entering college Mishima began to focus much more strongly on his writing. In 1943 he entered Tokyo Imperial University where he studied law. While a student there, he published his first collection of short stories, the first printing of which sold out in one week. Mishima graduated from the university in 1947 and worked for a brief time at the Finance Ministry. Mishima resigned from the ministry in 1948 and decided to support himself exclusively from his writing. He worked as a civil servant in the finance ministry for a year before devoting himself entirely to writing. In 1946 Mishima met Yasunari Kawabata, who recommended Mishima's stories to important magazines. Mishima's first novel was published in his school paper while he was thirteen. Later, with the help of Fumio Shimizu, a teacher at the Gakushuin school, his first long work "*The Forest in Full Bloom*" was published in a magazine called "Bungei Bunka". This was 1941 and he was sixteen years old. In 1944, Mishima had his first major work "*The Forest in Full Bloom*" published in Tokyo and Hiroaka Kimitake adopted the pen name of "Yukio Mishima" to hide his age. "Yukio" comes from the word *yuki*, which is Japanese for snow and *Mishima* is a town which known for its view of the snowy peaks of Mt. Fuji. (<http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/3705/mishima.html>).

His first novel, the semi-autobiographical "Confessions of a Mask" (1949), contained deep homoerotic and masochistic undercurrents. It dealt with

his discovery of his own homosexuality. The largely autobiographical work reflected Mishima's masochistic fantasies. His preoccupation with the body, its beauty and degeneration, marked several of his later novels. Mishima wished to create for himself a perfect body that age could not make ugly. However, it was well received by Japanese and international audiences and Mishima received permission from the Japanese government to travel abroad. During his wanderings, he continued to write and engage in conspicuous relationships with men. Thirst For Love (Ai No Kawaki, 1950), KINKAKUJI (1956, The Temple of the Golden Pavilion), The Sound of Waves (1954) won the Shinchosha Literary Prize and Silk and Insight (1964). The first part of the four-volume novel, Spring Snow (1968), Runaway Horses (1969), The Temple of Dawn (1970) and Five Signs of a God's Decay (1971). In his plays Mishima showed interest in the traditional Japanese theater and Western themes. Among his dramas, written for the Western style theatre, are Rokumeikan (1956), Tenth Day Chrysanthemum (1961), Madame de Sade (1965), an effort to see Marquis de Sade through women's eyes, The Fall of the House Suzaku (1967), and My Friend Hitler (1969). Mishima wrote several Kabuki pieces. His last work, The Moon Like a Drawn Bow, was performed in 1969 at the National Theatre. The play ended with scene of a seppuku. Mishima was considered to be in his time the only living author talented enough to write Kabuki plays in traditional style. On the day of his death, Mishima's publishers received the final revision of "The Sea of Fertility," a tetralogy immersed in Buddhist doctrine that would be hailed as his masterpiece. No Japanese writer before or after his death has received the extent of international attention and admiration bestowed upon Mishima

At the height of his career, after having achieved international and local fame, considerable wealth and a certain degree of reputation, Yukio Mishima committed ritual suicide. At the age of 45, Mishima ended his own life by performing a Japanese suicide rite known as seppuku or hari-kiri. Many critics and Mishima followers have speculated on the reason for his suicide. Some claim the author was an radical, who lived in search of ideal beauty, and in his eyes death was the penultimate form of beauty and only in death could he

become complete. Others still, believe his suicide was a political act intended as a protest against the Japan's post WW II constitution, which he believed had stolen the soul of traditional of his homeland. Whatever reason lay behind his suicide, Mishima's legacy lies in his tremendous body of work. And yet the 25th anniversary his death, which falls on November 25th, will be remembered quietly in Japan.

Synopsis:

The story is focused around the character, Etsuko, a not-old-but-not-quite-young woman who recently had been widowed by her husband, Ryosuke. Ryosuke both beat his wife and had extra-marital affairs. Etsuko's husband would leave for days at a time, making excuses to her when she inquired about his activities. One particular weekend Ryosuke did not come home, Etsuko resolved to commit suicide. However, when her husband returned, he immediately fell ill. Out of sympathy, love, and duty as a wife, she postponed her plan and devoted her time to taking care of her husband. Finally, however, Ryosuke's illness became serious and he was forced to move to the hospital, where a doctor determined that he was suffering from typhoid disease and his future was uncertain. While her husband was in the hospital, Etsuko's suspicions of her husband's disloyalty were confirmed as many women, whom Etsuko has never met, came to visit him. In particular, Ryosuke's employer's wife, whose pictures were very displayed with Ryosuke's things at home, came to see him during his hospital stay. Etsuko recognized the woman and forbade her to see Ryosuke. However, the woman was bound and determined and forced herself into the room. For the first time, Etsuko saw her husband's affection for other women first hand, and when he finally dies, she is both depressed in her loneliness and relieved at the loss of this abusive man.

After Ryosuke's death, Etsuko goes into the somewhat rural city of Maidemmura, where her father-in-law, Yakichi invited her to stay with him, as well as her brother in law and his family. Yakichi then fell in love with his daughter-in-law and even shared a bed with her, each night touching her in hopes of her returning his feelings. At first, Etsuko was resistant, but

eventually gave in to Yakichi's desires, though not out of love. In fact, Etsuko was actually in love with the eighteen-year-old farmhand, Saburo. While she was very much attracted to his rugged simplicity and seemingly gentle attitude, Etsuko tried her hardest to keep this her innermost secret.

Etsuko was able to hide her feelings until one day. The story opened with Etsuko buying socks for Saburo, which she did not develop the courage to give him. After she finally gave Saburo the socks, she finds them in the servant's garbage and discovers that it was Miyo, the female servant, who had thrown them away out of jealousy. This sparks paranoia in Etsuko who afterward spent most of her time tracking the servants and digging through both their belongings to find any sign of romance between them. Her search hits a peak when Miyo ends up pregnant by Saburo. Deeply hurt, Etsuko demanded to know if Saburo really loved Miyo. Saburo assured Etsuko that he did not love Miyo, but this is mainly because he did understand the concept of love, and because he could tell that this was what Etsuko wanted to hear. At this point, however, Saburo was still not aware of her feelings toward him. In her rage of jealousy and confusion, Etsuko then told Saburo he must marry Miyo so that she might feel out his response to this idea. Casually and unquestionably, Saburo agreed to the demand.

Etsuko's love for Saburo made Yakichi madly jealous. He had been put in the same position with Etsuko that she was in with Saburo. Out of his jealousy, Yakichi complicated matters by telling stories of how "in love" Saburo and Miyo were, which provoked Etsuko. When Yakichi decided that the best thing for Etsuko to do would be leave Maidemmura and then made this offer to her, she obliged only under the circumstances that Miyo would be fired. Yakichi agreed to calm her and relieved Miyo when Saburo took a short trip home. When he returned, he did not question about where Miyo had gone. Crazy with anticipation, Etsuko decided to confront him on the issue and announce her emotions toward him. The two met secretly one night and Etsuko begged to know what Saburo's relationship with Miyo was. Again, he considered the idea of love in general and the word seemed to have little effect on him. Due to his lack of emotion he informs Etsuko that he is not in love

with Miyo and never wished to marry her. Etsuko is full of angry and begged to know whom Saburo did love. After little thinking and with no real emotion, Saburo said he loved Etsuko. However, she could easily tell that this was not the truth. He moved toward her and made sexual advances to which Etsuko denied. In fear, she ran away and he chased after her. She screamed in terror and Yakichi awoke. Questionable, he ran outside to see what was happening. He brought a mattock with him but no intention of using it against Saburo. In a violent rage Etsuko grabbed the mattock and killed Saburo as Yakichi watched in horror. She forces Yakichi to help her bury the body, and when the two are finished, Etsuko sleeps for the first time in the course of the story.

Saburo's murder was not the first violent behavior shown by Etsuko. While throughout the novel she acted quietly and seemed hardly malicious, her violent streak was foreshadowed when Etsuko and her step-sister and step-brother had gone to a festival where Saburo was performing a ritualistic dance. Etsuko passionately threw herself into the mesh of shirtless, flourishing bodies as she was drawn into the sight of Saburo's unclothed back. She was pushed into him and her nails drew blood from his back. Rather than feeling fear, Etsuko was flourishing on this feeling of closeness.