

# Yukio Mishima's Report to the Emperor



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21st century Mishima

Yukio Mishima is a world figure of special significance for the 21st century. Mishima has so far been renowned as Japan's most famous writer who committed spectacular suicide in 1970. A vague, mysterious aura of scandal surrounds that event which took place at an army headquarters in Tokyo. But what exactly was the purpose of Mishima's samurai suicide? It was in fact a terrorist action aiming at a coup d' état to restore the Shinto cult of Emperor Worship. Mishima has never been understood as a paradigm figure of terrorist fundamentalism. His suicide action in 1970 marks the

beginning of a thirty years' war of international terrorism which culminated in Sept 11th. Mishima's suicide was an act of cultural martyrdom prophesying the whirlwind of 21st century Islamist terrorism. Mishima must now be recognized as the herald of three decades of terrorism in its Cold War passage from extreme left anarchism to ultra-right fundamentalism in the present.

## YUKIO MISHIMA'S REPORT TO THE EMPEROR

'Mishima stuck a knife into the heart of today's Japan.'

This statement by Yukio Mishima's biographer Henry Scott Stokes in the year 2000 marked the 30 th anniversary of Mishima's suicide. Memorable words that recall Mishima's terrorist exploit on 25 November 1970.

On that day at high noon, Mishima, armed with a samurai sword and dagger, and three cadets of his paramilitary corps, took a general hostage in an army base in central Tokyo.

Mishima urged the assembled troops to rise up in mutiny and 'restore the Emperor'. He knew that his attempted coup d'état would not succeed. Mishima proceeded to commit seppuku -

ritual disembowelment and beheading - in the kidnapped general's office.

What was the point of such an act in Japan's new era of globalization? Was it the futile gesture of a deranged extremist? The last extravagance of a notorious showman?

Mishima's action raises apparently insoluble questions. Why did this most Western of Japanese writers commit himself to a fundamentalist revival of Emperor Worship? What can explain a conversion to the terrorism in someone blessed by fame and wealth, a Nobel Prize candidate, an erudite and genially sociable being? By what secret byways did Mishima's change to terrorist martyrdom occur?

The enigma remains unresolved to this day.

Yukio Mishima's report to the Emperor , the novel by Richard Appignanesi, resolves the enigma in this fictional autobiography of Japan's last samurai. The novel's portrayal of Mishima extends biography to the private inner world of autobiography.

Yukio Mishima's report to the Emperor is a ferociously realistic account, by turns grim and comic, of a soul laid bare in the mirror of Mishima's own scepticism. Mishima traces his wayward progress through the shambles of his childhood in pre-War Japan, in a family riven by the extremes of love and hate, his failure in wartime to 'die in service to the Emperor', his descent to the lower depths of napalmed Tokyo on a voyage of homosexual self-discovery, the humiliation of Japan's defeat and Mishima's embroilment in the subterfuges of the American Occupation.

Mishima confesses himself a ruthlessly ambitious young writer. Mishima, the cynical prodigy, gains early celebrity as Japan advances to post-War economic recovery. He then prepares for his most outrageous public performance. Mishima transforms a sickly body into muscle by iron-willed efforts, a reconstruction that matches Japan's own phoenix rise from the ashes of Hiroshima, but with a contrary purpose in mind. His aim is self-destruction as an act of cultural martyrdom.

Mishima's goal demands not only a refashioned body but a mind converted to faith. This is the harder task of subduing an intellectual spirit resistant to belief of any kind. He must also sustain his terrorist resolve under a misleading façade of exhibitionism. Mishima reveals the nerve-wracking double life of public deception and inner purpose that he led for many years.

His quest for spiritual conviction takes him to Benares, city of the dead on the Ganges River, where he seeks the original source of Japanese Buddhism lost in the maelstrom of India's contradictions. Mishima, the naked dancer, enters into shocking and hallucinatory adventures that draw him into an encounter with a saint of the legendary Aghori cult, the 'eaters of the dead', and a realization of unlikely enlightenment in a leper colony.

His search takes him further on a pilgrimage to Japan's sacred mountains with Baroness Omiyeke, the 'living goddess' revered by the Yamabushi, an esoteric sect of mountain guardians. The formidably seductive Baroness also plays a double game as spirit guide and hostess to Japan's political intriguers. Mishima ventures into this twilight world in which legitimate politics shades off to inbred corruption and the yakuza underworld.

The novel ends with a modern Noh play in which Mishima appears in his own post mortem script as the terrorist martyr remembered by his mother, wife, friends and political accomplices.

作者介绍:

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