

The Madness and Perversion of Yukio Mishima



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This psychological study focuses on one of Japan's most prolific writers, Yukio Mishima, whose fiction was suffused with images of sadomasochism, homosexual rape, hatred of women, vengeance, rage, and humiliation. Mishima's violent homoerotic imagery and fascistic politics have aroused a range of reactions--from hostile criticism to idealizing fantasies and even militant devotion. Still, he has been called an extraordinary talent and compared to Hemingway, Proust, and Joyce. Here we venture deep into the mind and personal history of Mishima, who was also an eccentric exhibitionist, posed nude for surreal photographs, acted in gangster films, and played the part of a Hollywood celebrity. Amid his flamboyance, Mishima's sexual perversity and right-wing militant politics have also aroused trepidation in many readers and critics, especially in light of his ritual suicide by disembowelment. Piven gives us a psychological understanding of the life, fantasies, and obsessions of Mishima, as all followed early trauma, severe conflict, narcissistic injury and an ensuing fixation on death. We see, for example, how Mishima's psychotic and authoritarian grandmother suffocated him emotionally by sequestering him from his mother and the outside world for the first 12 years of his life. Unlike other works that explain and amplify his philosophy, "The Madness and Perversion of Yukio Mishima" deconstructs his philosophy, removing his masks, pretenses, and disguises.

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