



Yukio Mishima (Critical Lives)

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The most internationally acclaimed Japanese author of the twentieth century, Yukio Mishima (1925–70) was a prime candidate for the Nobel Prize. But the prolific author shocked the world in 1970 when he attempted a coup d'état that ended in his suicide by ritual disembowelment. In this radically new analysis of Mishima's extraordinary life, Damian Flanagan deviates from the stereotypical depiction of a right-wing nationalist and aesthete, presenting the author instead as a man in thrall to the modern world while also plagued by hidden neuroses and childhood trauma that pushed him toward his explosive final act.

Flanagan argues that Mishima was a man obsessed with the concepts of time and "emperor," and reveals how these were at the heart of his literature and life. Untangling the distortions in the writer's memoirs, Flanagan traces the evolution of Mishima's attempts to master and transform his sexuality and artistic persona. While often perceived as a solitary protest figure, Mishima, Flanagan shows, was very much in tune with postwar culture—he took up bodybuilding and became a model and actor in the 1950s, adopted the themes of contemporary political scandals in his work, courted English translators, and became influenced by the student protests and hippie subculture of the late 1960s. A groundbreaking reevaluation of the author, this succinct biography paints a revealing portrait of Mishima's life and work.



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