MISHIMA YUKIO'S MODERN NO PLAYS

BY

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Australian National University, 1967.
Except for the acknowledgements
this is entirely my own work.
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* * *
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MISHIMA'S MODERN TREATMENT OF
THE NŌ PLAYS

All five plays were performed on the leading stages of Japan by experimental theatrical groups. The productions created a sensation at the time, but their popularity was short-lived. However, their English translation by Donald Keene, published in 1957, met with a spectacular reception in the West. Mishima subsequently wrote three more plays: Nōzoki, Jūkō, and Tenôshiki. These are included in the complete edition of Mishima Yukio's Nō Shū (The Collected Writings of Mishima Yukio). In November 1954, at the age of twenty-nine, Mishima was awarded the Shinbun Literary Prize for the novel Shinbun Raiten (The Sound of Haven). By December 1955, when he won the Kinosaki Drama Award for the play Shinbun Raiten (The Sound of Haven),
Mishima Yukio's modern No plays provide ideal scope for a study in contrast between the old and the new. Traditional values and the artistic concepts of a classical art are projected in them through the prism of the present-day realities of Japan. The No and Mishima's adaptations make a living contrast of the ultimate in refinement and the boldest fling of experimentation. The juxtaposition of the depth of a mature art with the dubious glamour of avant-garde innovations presents itself.

The plays were written during Mishima's early rise to fame, when he was mainly known for the success of his virgin novel Confessions of A Mask. His first choice for adaptation was Kantan, published in October 1950 in the Ningen magazine. Aya no Tsuzumi (The Damask Drum), January 1951, Sotoba Komachi, January 1952, Aoi no Ue (The Lady Aoi), January 1954 and Hani no Tsuzum, January 1955 were published successively in the New Year issues, which indicates the importance Mishima attached to these plays and his confidence in regard to their success.

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In November 1954, at the age of twenty nine, Mishima was awarded the Shinchō Literary Prize for the novel Shio Sai (The Sound of Waves). By December 1955, when he won the Kishida Drama Award for the play Shiroari no Su 白薔薇の巢
(The White Ants' Nest), his fame as a novelist and playwright was established. Such explosive ascendance on the literary scene did not escape the attention of Western scholars. Meredith Weatherby's translations of Kamen no Kokuhaku (Confessions of A Mask) and The Sound of Waves appeared in 1956. This early Western recognition was in fact instrumental in Mishima's quick success and his later permanent attraction of public attention.

Confessions of a Mask and The Sound of Waves, written with youthful vigour and precocious talent, won a general success in the West. But it was Donald Keene's translation of Five Modern No Plays that brought Mishima worldwide fame. From this English version, the plays were produced with overwhelming success in the U.S.A., Germany, Sweden, Mexico and Australia. Together with Ionesco's plays, they were the first successful avant-garde theatrical productions in postwar Germany. Thus, at the age of thirty-two, Mishima had gained international recognition. He was invited by the Knopf publishing company to attend a production of the plays during the season from October until December 1957 in New York. This was the zenith of his success. Since then Mishima's popularity has decreased in Japan, although he has remained a most controversial figure; in the West his reputation has continued to grow.

Mishima's modern No plays therefore occupy a singular position in his literary career for several reasons: they mark the peak of his youthful international stardom; they highlight the essential qualities of Mishima as a writer and a man; they bring to the fore the characteristic shortcomings of Mishima's creative approach and some of the better points of his literary style. Their world success, due partly to the unfamiliarity of the Western audience with their prototype No plays, caused the Japanese to become more critical of his work. His appeal to the West was viewed in relation to the ambivalent response of the Japanese to Mishima's
work. His professed reverence for tradition was weighed against the forward impetus of his inventiveness, and his technical competence was contrasted with the questionable depth of his vision. Thus a clearer picture of Mishima's literary personality emerged.

A number of prominent Japanese critics have agreed that the Collection of Modern No Plays is the most characteristic, if not the most significant, work Mishima has produced. Some have gone to the extent of signalizing it as a masterpiece:

If I were asked which was Mishima 'Yukio's greatest masterpiece, I would unhesitatingly name the Collection of Modern No Plays.

A famous scholar of Japanese literature, Yoshida Seiichi, discusses Mishima's modern No plays as a significant experiment in creating a poetic modern drama from the No prototypes, which no full-fledged modern writer has ventured to do. According to him, Mishima treats the stylistic framework of the No as a setting for a universal emotional or psychological experience captured and portrayed beyond the influence of external events.

Mishima seems to have used the medium of the No for an exploration of the inner life of modern people and the interpretation of its phenomena. A new way of explaining the mysteries and paradoxes of the soul of man by reference to the classics from the remote past and re-interpretation of their message is one of the outstanding characteristics of modern literature. How far Mishima succeeded in this scheme remains to be examined.

Detailed analysis and comparison of Mishima's plays with the No will be given later. In this chapter, only a summary of Mishima's treatment of the No plots is provided to set the framework for discussion.
Mishima himself mentioned Aoi no Ue as his favourite play among his No adaptations. The original No is a well known onryō-mono or 'revengeful ghost' piece based on the episode from Genji Monogatari  The Tale of Genji. It is a story about the destructive power of jealousy and depicts the universal phenomenon of 'a high intensity of pure feeling.' The jealousy of Princess Rokujo 六条, a former mistress of Prince Genji, assumes the form of an angry demon, which torments and eventually kills Genji's young mistress Aoi-no-Ue. The No play treats the story in terms of the Buddhist notions of absolution from the 'burning house' of this suffering world through the supernatural power of religious incantations. Unlike the No, ending with the subjugation of Rokujo's ghost, Mishima's play concludes with the death of Aoi-no-Ue. Mishima seems to have preferred the original version of the story with its message that jealousy has sufficient power to kill a person.

The story of Heian times changes in Mishima's play into an incident in a sick-room of a modern hospital. In place of the kosode  kimono representing Aoi-no-Ue on her sick-bed in the original No play, Mishima's Lady Aoi is actually seen on the stage asleep in bed dressed in a pure white nightgown.

As the play begins Wakabayashi Hikaru 若林光 (that is Hikaru Genji 光源氏 in the original Tale), enters wearing a raincoat and carrying a travelling bag. The nurse makes the reference to The Tale of Genji obvious by calling Hikaru a 'real Prince Genji' because of his good looks. She tells him that his wife, Aoi-no-Ue, must be suffering from sexual complexes, as she appears to have tormenting dreams every night: A middle-aged, stylishly dressed, beautiful lady from the upper bourgeoisie comes regularly in a big silvery car to visit her. As the nurse describes her arrival, Hikaru looks out of the window to see the lady, who is in fact his former mistress, Rokujo Yasuko 六条康子
actually arriving at the hospital. Thus, the nurse appears to take the role of *tsure*, who in the original play was a sorceress Teruhi, appearing on stage mainly to summon the ghost of Princess Rokujo.

Yasuko Rokujo enters wearing black gloves and goes to place the 'flowers of pain' at the head of Aoi's bed. Gazing at the young face of dreaming Aoi, she is seized by jealousy and places her gloved hand at the sick woman’s throat to make her dream of being strangled. This action parallels that of Princess Rokujo’s ghost striking at the head of Aoi’s sick-bed with her fan in the original No.

The play proceeds with a dialogue between Hikaru and Mrs. Rokujo about life, passion and their former love affair. Hikaru, who does not appear at all in the original No, has, in Mishima's version, more than the function of *waki*, or the role of deuteragonist. There is a living emotional interplay between him and Mrs. Rokujo. As they recapture the memories of the time they met at Mrs. Rokujo's villa by the lakeside, a sailboat glides on-stage screening off Aoi's bed with its sail. In this form, the No time-structure is realised with the present retraced and the importance of the past overlapping into the present.

Hikaru and Mrs. Rokujo become engrossed in re-living their past, thereby causing increasing pains to the haunted Aoi, who is gradually being driven to death. Mrs. Rokujo is again possessed by a surging passion of jealousy and forces her way behind the sail to strangle Aoi. Hikaru's struggle to hold her back calls to mind the No scene of tense rivalry between the protagonist, Princess Rokujo, wearing a *hannya* mask, and the *waki*, Kohjiiri, a holy man of Yokawa, who endeavours to exorcise the ghost with his prayers.
The scene changes back to the hospital room with the sailboat gliding off-stage and Mrs. Rokujo disappearing. When Hikaru comes to his senses, the idea crosses his mind to telephone Mrs. Rokujo and make sure he was not dreaming. At the same time as she answers the call, her voice is heard outside the door of the hospital room asking for the black gloves she had left by the telephone. Leaving the telephone receiver off, Hikaru takes the gloves outside, whereupon Mrs. Rokujo's voice on the telephone becomes loud enough for the audience to hear. At her last impatient call to Hikaru, heard from the telephone, Aoi, writhing in agony, suddenly thrusts her arms at the telephone and with a horrible cry collapses over the bed and dies.

This play is short, simple and free from excessive display of learning or sophisticated puns in dialogue. Its composition is taut and the theme is conveyed effectively. It is considered by many critics as Mishima's greatest achievement in this kind.

Another play with a high degree of pure emotion is Hanjo. The prototype No play belongs to the kyōjo-mono or 'mad woman' pieces division of the Fourth Group. It is the story of a woman in love who loses her mind yearning for her beloved. The protagonist in the first part is a harlot downcast in gloom, who appears in the second part as a mad woman personifying the sentiments of quiet yearning. Her lover, Yoshida-shosho, eventually calls at her village Nogami of the Mino province on his way to the capital. When the mad woman sees the fan she gave to her lover as a keepsake, her sanity returns, she recognises her beloved, they return the fans they had exchanged as a pledge of love and the play ends in a joyous mood.

In Mishima's play, Hanago, the deranged harlot, becomes Hanako, a former geisha placed under the care of a woman painter Honda Jitsuko. The play begins with Jitsuko discovering in the newspaper an item about her...
protegee, published as a tragic love story of a mad girl, who every day waits at the station for her former lover, peering into the faces of alighting passengers only to return in disappointment. Yoshio 吉雄 (that is, Yoshida-Shōshō of the original play) eventually comes especially to seek her out after reading the article. However, the insane Hanako refuses to recognise the object of her yearning. In the end, it is apparent that she experiences life only in the state of waiting.

This becomes the theme of Mishima's play. He elaborates it to such a degree that one wonders if his true motive in writing the play was to explore the meaning of the permanent state of expectation. Hanako's patron, Jitsuko, loves the mad girl because she feels that Hanako possesses all the beautiful things in the world by having lived a life of waiting. To Jitsuko, who has never been loved by anyone, Hanako's heart is her own heart, for Hanako is:

someone who would live, most beautifully, on my behalf, my helpless love.

The theme of Aya no Tsuzumi, (The Damask Drum) is the implacability of man's love. Its message is close to Musset's "il ne faut pas jouer avec l'amour".

In the original play, a 'double entrance' piece of the Fourth Group, an ugly old court gardener, at the sight of a beautiful Princess, falls desperately in love. Out of mixed feelings of pity and contempt, the Princess conveys to him the message that his wish would be granted should he produce a sound from the damask drum hanging on the branches of a laurel-tree by the pond in the court garden. Failing to make the drum sound, despite beating it eagerly, the old man throws himself into the pond in despair. In the second part, his ghost appears enticing the Princess with the sound of the water in the pond to haunt and torment her. Eventually, he sinks back "into the whirlpool of desire".
Mishima's version has a stage divided into the left and the right side as the third floor rooms of the same building. Iwakichi, the old janitor of the law office in the right-hand room, has fallen in love with a society dame Hanako when he caught sight of her having a dress made at the dressmaking establishment in the left-hand room. He calls her the princess of the laurel-tree of the moon garden and sends her passionate love letters. Hanako reads his thirtieth letter, in which the old man asks for only one kiss, to her sophisticated admirers. One of them, her dancing-teacher, suggests they trick the old man with a damask drum, which he had brought along to be used as a prop in a play. Failing to produce a sound from the drum and thus to have his wish granted, the old man throws himself onto the street choosing death rather than shame.

Some time later, Hanako is drawn to the same place and faces the ghost in the dead of night. The ghost, who had summoned her, beats the drum to prove his love, but Hanako pretends she cannot hear. Before striking the drum a hundred times, the ghost is overcome with doubt, and with only one beat to go, losing heart, he gives up striking and disappears with the words:

What is the use of striking a soundless drum?

The play ends with Hanako saying as in a dream:

I would have heard it too, if he had only struck it once more.

This echoes the undertones of Kannami's famous play *Sotoba Komachi*, based on the legend of Komachi, one of whose many lovers, Fukakusa-no-Shōshō, died on the last night failing to cut the hundredth notch on the shaft-bench of his chariot that carried him ninety-nine times to his beloved in the hope of winning her love.

*Sotoba Komachi* is also a *kyōjo-mono* or 'mad woman' piece of the Fourth Group. Komachi, possessed by the spirit of her
tormented lover Fukakusa-no-Shōshō, wanders about in the suburbs of Miyako. She rests on a sacred stupa (sotoba), for which some passing monks rebuke her. In the ensuing discussion between Komachi and the priests, her Zen type of non-formalist approach proves superior to the Shingon sect tenets put forward by the priests, and she emerges released from her madness. In the end, she chooses a religious path as a humble seeker for Buddha's mercy.

In Mishima's version, the stupa is replaced by a park bench and Komachi becomes an old hag picking up cigarette butts in the park. Fukakusa-no-Shōshō actually appears on the stage as a poor drunken poet. With such a tour de force Mishima brings the old hag back to her young days of the Rokumeikan times and makes her dance a waltz with the poet as Captain Fukakusa on the last night after his persevering visits for ninety-nine nights.

The poet is full of apprehension of this night when his desires are about to be granted:

What a strange, lonely, disheartening feeling it is! It feels as if I have already taken into my hands that which I had long been yearning for.

To which, Komachi replies:

For a man, that is perhaps the most frightening feeling.

Komachi encourages the poet who feels as if he could soar up into the sky, and at the same time curiously depressed:

Go ahead, - you can only go ahead.

In a state of intoxication, imagining the actually dirty looking old hag to be the ideal of beauty, the poet exclaims:

If I think something is beautiful, I'll jolly well say it is beautiful, even if I die for it.

In the end, defying the old woman's warning not to call her beautiful, the poet proclaims her to be Komachi, "the most beautiful woman in the world", which brings death upon him.
The theme of **Kantan** is the fleetingness of life and the awakening to the dreamlike quality of worldly happiness. It is a famous No play belonging to *Yūgaku-mono* 道業物 or 'displaying of accomplishments' pieces of the Fourth Group and noted for its rich variety. Based on the story from *The Pillow Records* (Chenchung-chi) 把中記 by Shen Chi-chi, a Tang writer of eighth century China, it is full of references to Chinese sources.

Critics have noted it significant that this play was Mishima's first choice for adaptation. The **Kantan-otoko** 邪盜男 mask worn in the play represents the face of an ingenious youth. The expression **Kantan-otoko** itself has come to have special connotations for the Japanese. It implies the attitude of a brilliant youth carried away by worldly ambitions, yet capable of seeing through their futility. Mishima's treatment of the theme shows his fundamental attitude to life and art.

In the No play, Lu Shang (Rosei) 露生 is seeking enlightenment, while unprepared to renounce the world. He decides to call upon the famous holy man on Mt. Yangfei (Yōhi) 羊仏 in Tsu, modern Hupeh Province, and reaches the village of Hantan (Kantan). While taking a nap on a miraculous pillow at a village inn, he becomes an Emperor, reaches the height of prosperity enjoying the glories of life for fifty years and drinks a nectar to keep him alive for a thousand years. Woken up by the inn-keeper when the millet is cooked, he realises that even

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A hundred years of pleasure full
May look a dream when life is done.
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So he turns homewards, resolving to abandon worldly ambitions and follow the way of faith.

In Mishima's version, a sophisticated young man Jirō 次郎 feels his life is finished at the age of eighteen. He returns to his native village, seeking comfort at the home of his old
nurse Kiku. There, he questions the latter about her strange pillow from China, of which he had heard from Kiku's ex-husband who is now a wastrel somewhere in Tokyo. Having persuaded Kiku to let him sleep on the pillow, Jirō sees a dream in which he is surrounded by beauties, becomes the president of a company and rises in the world to the point of becoming a dictator. However, this youth, who from the outset has had no will to live, rejects in his dream-life everything - women, money and fame. In the midst of glory, he is overcome with the feeling of life's evanescence. Yet, when he discovers that there is a plot to poison him, because he is determined to go on living to the bitter end, he flatly refuses the poison, and in so doing, wakes up. Jirō's verdict:

Life is just what I thought it was.

implies that he was aware of the futilities of worldly ambitions to begin with, and that he went on living without being led astray by them. When he wakes up having afresh perceived this truth, he beholds the garden, which was until then devoid of flowers, abloom with flowers of the four seasons. The multifold aspects of life and nature appear before him as a symbol of eternal youth.

This is an original interpretation of the No play. Of all Mishima's adaptations it has the most striking theme, which may be said to add a new meaning to its prototype.

As Mishima himself said, he seemed, with these five plays, to have exhausted the source of inspiration for modernising No plays. However, he continued his experiments with the No, departing even further from the originals. In the subsequent three plays, the elements of allegory and parody are much more pronounced.

Dōjōji is a legendary story about a travelling priest who put up for the night at Princess Kiyo's house. The priest rejects her advances, remaining true to his vows of
celibacy. The spurned maiden turns into a dragon, who pursues the priest and ends up by coiling around and melting the temple bell of Dōjōji, under which the priest took shelter.

The No version is a 'double entrance' piece of the Fourth Group, written by Kannami, in which the protagonist of the first part is a shirabyōshi 白拍子 dancer, who assumes the form of a dragon in the second part. The play had a former version under the title of Kanamaki 鐘巻 (The Bell Coiling).

Mishima replaces the temple bell with a huge wardrobe of monstrous dimensions 'capable of swallowing up the whole world.' The wardrobe is sold at auction in front of an old furniture store to a group of five competing businessmen who run up the price of the glamorised curio to three million yen. At that point, a beautiful young dancer Kiyōko 清子 (that is, Kiyohime - The Princess Kiyo) enters and causes uproar by making a bid of three thousand yen. She discloses that the wardrobe is worth no more.

According to her story, the wardrobe used to belong to a well known family called Ōyama 烏山. Mrs. Ōyama's young lover, Yasushi 安二, was Kiyōko's boyfriend too. He would often hide in the wardrobe to escape from Mr. Ōyama. One day, the fiercely jealous Mr. Ōyama, discovers that someone is hiding in the wardrobe, so he fires a revolver into it until the horrible cries stop and blood comes trickling out of the cracks.

After hearing the story, the prospective buyers lose interest in the wardrobe, and the proprietor of the second-hand furniture store is forced to consider Kiyōko's bid. However, he is not prepared to sell for under fifty thousand yen, while she had staked all her possessions on this bid of three thousand yen in a desperate hope of getting this death-trap of her beloved into her own flat. Failing to persuade the proprietor, she decides to threaten that she will disfigure her face and jumps into the
wardrobe in imitation of the bell-entrance scene of the original No play.

But Mishima has further surprises for the audience. Kyōko, who had made up her mind to pour sulphuric acid over her face, emerges unscathed. Instead of being transformed into a witch, she comes out with a graceful poise and countenance as beautiful as before. In fact, she chooses rather to flirt with a rich man who had been making overtures to her. In other words, her face is the same as before, but her spirit and her feelings have changed. Because of her wounded heart, a girl of pure feelings has become a cunning woman.

Here, Yoshida Seiichi comments:

The scheme which makes Kyōko fall for another through the loss of her beloved is not particularly outstanding, but seen as an allegorical variation of Dojōji, however odd, the work is interesting because it portrays the modern girls' way of life and sentiments.

Such elements of parody are developed even further in Mishima's adaptation of Yuya. Yuya is a famous Third Group Kazura-mono 鬱物 or 'female wig' piece by Zeami 世阿弥, containing a chū-no-mai 中之舞 dance. Based on the episode from Heike Monogatari 平家物語 (Vol. X.), it is woven of graceful lyrical parts depicting human emotions revolving around the heroine's dilemma of loyalty to her lord and anxiety for the life of her mother. The popularity of the play may be gauged from an old Japanese saying, "Yuya, Matsukaze are cooked rice." 熊野 松風は御飯 (that is, the nation's staple food.)

Mishima replaces Taira-no-Munemori 平の宗盛, a dictatorial ruler at the height of the prosperity of the Heike, a man of self-willed stubborn character who has a soft heart underneath, a true representative of the Heike nobility, with a powerful modern
businessman of about fifty—smoking the indispensable cigar. Munemori's mistress Yuya, the personification of submissive love, unswerving loyalty and delicate feelings, becomes a fickle, baby-doll type of child-wife of the modern businessman. The action takes place in a luxurious Tokyo apartment instead of Taira-no-Munemori's palace. Only the cherry blossom-viewing motif is retained.

As in the original play, Mishima's Munemori ignores Yuya's pleas to let her go and visit her sick mother. He insists on taking her to see the cherry blossoms in Kyoto, reminding her that "cherry blossoms do not wait".

Yuya's friend Asagao, called Asako by Mishima, brings the famous letter from Yuya's mother. In the original play, the mother's feelings of grief and longing, as expressed in the letter, are sufficient to bring the audience to tears. In keeping with the original, Mishima gets Yuya to read the letter for him, adding a trivial comment:

Won't you read it for me? I always get a secretary to read important letters to me.

The letter is a prosaic and pale imitation of the original:

Yuya: (reads the letter)

As I wrote you at the beginning of March, somehow I have a presentiment that I shan't be able to see the cherry blossoms this spring; so, as the snow melts little by little in Hokukoku, and as the springlike softness is added even to the clouds in the sky, I have come to think that the signs of spring are the omen of my death. Collecting the contributions for ill-health day after day, I notice how the stubborn icicles under the eaves appear to be thinning before my eyes. While I am still alive, I wish I could meet you at least to catch one glimpse of you.

While the real Yuya restrained her grief and submissively followed her lord with a tearful heart along the michiyuki
to Kiyomizu 清水, Mishima's Yuya wilfully argues with her husband, refuses to go, and opens the apartment window, suggesting they enjoy the cherry blossoms in a small park seen from their balcony.

But the climax of the parody is yet to come. The sky darkens, overcast with black clouds. Cherry blossoms lose colour. It begins to rain and Yuya cries:

My cherry blossoms, my cherry blossoms are drenched in the rain.

This is a farcical echo of Yuya's famous poem, which moved Munemori so much that he permitted her to go and visit her mother:

Spring showers,
Are they not tears,
Are they not tears
That are wept for the falling of cherry flowers?

Alas! I know not what to do;
Reluctant though I be to leave behind
Miyako's spring, the flowers of the Eastland
May have scattered far and wide.

Mishima's Munemori also yields to Yuya's tears and gives her leave. But her delight is interrupted by a knock at the door. Yamada 山田, Munemori's loyal secretary enters, pushing forward Yuya's mother Masa 離子, a fighting-fit, gaudily dressed, plumpish woman over fifty. Masa is forced to divulge Yuya's secret love affair with a young man Kaoru 喜多. In reply, Yuya declares that Masa is not her real mother. Munemori's efficient secretary produces a document saying that her real mother died when Yuya was fifteen. He also gives evidence of Kaoru's bragging that his girl has become a rich man's wife to earn their wedding expenses.

The play ends with Munemori lighting another cigar, making
17. Yuya recline on the bed as before - the compromise she gladly accepts pretending that nothing had happened. Gazing distantly at Yuya's face, Munemori concludes with his final, self-contented words:

No, it was wonderful seeing the cherry blossoms! I have really enjoyed a good cherry blossom viewing.

It is hard to conceive how the masterpiece of Yuya could have turned into Mishima's version. The original play is a peerless gem of writing, with accurate expression of refined emotions. Its style is exquisite, the character delineation superb, the transition of the situation smooth and the overall impact of the play most edifying. Mishima's parody, on the contrary, leaves the reader with a barren feeling and an unpleasant taste. One wonders if it was conceived as a comment on the spirit of modern times in comparison with the spirit of Muromachi Japan portrayed by Zeami's play. The contrast is most sobering, for one is struck by the apparent emptiness of the world of Mishima's play.

The last play Mishima adapted also belongs to the Fourth Group げんざい - げんざい - げんざい げんざい or 'lunatic pieces'. Yoroboshi, meaning a tottering Buddhist priest, is the sad story of a young man Shuntokumaru. Banished from his parental home in childhood on a false charge, he had turned blind from grief and fallen to the plight of a beggar. Nevertheless, he has not lost graceful feelings, aesthetic sense and strong imagination. He is able to appreciate the scent of plum blossoms and recollect in his mind the beauty of nature, such as the sea inlets bathed in the sunset. Though an ill-fated child, he has found enlightenment in becoming a refined, solitary, gentle character. The appeal of this play is in the inspiration of such a character.
The action of the No play takes place in the Tenno-ji temple-grounds, where the repenting father, Michitoshi, distributes alms, praying for the boy's happiness. He recognises his son in the tottering beggar who joined the alms-giving party, and, after the sunset, which makes Yoroboshi dance in ecstatic frenzy, he tactfully soothes the young man's shame and embarrassment, persuading him to come home.

In Mishima's version, Shuntoku becomes Toshinori, a blind war orphan picked up at Ueno subway in a pitiful state, whose eyes were burnt out by the flames after an air raid. The scene is a Family Courthouse room where Toshinori, now a young man of twenty, is brought before his real parents and his adopted parents, both of whom claim their parental rights.

It turns out that Toshinori is a kind of madman who tortures and abuses anyone patient enough to show him affection. He calls his real mother a worm and everyone else fools and morons. The parents meekly agree with him to keep his temper down.

The sunset scene that sent Yoroboshi into ecstatic frenzy features in Mishima's play too. Toshinori becomes possessed with the vision of a stark red sky of what he calls "the end of the world". In a fit of agonising hallucinations, he describes the tragic scene of destruction from his childhood, which culminates in the vision of flames piercing into his eyes:

Flames are here and there and everywhere.
To the East and to the West, South and North.
The walls of fire are quietly shaving everything clean in the distance. A small fire comes out from them. Tossing its soft hair, it rushes at me. It whirls around me as if to tease me. Then, stopping before my eyes, it seems to be piercing my eyeballs. It's all over. The flames!... have leapt into my eyes!
After regaining consciousness, Toshinori is comforted by Sakurama Shinako the arbitration commissioner. He asks for food, and, remaining alone in the bright room, says vacantly:

Why is it that everyone loves me?

A feeling of destruction, death, despair and perverse mental aberration lingers after Mishima's play, which stands in sharp contrast to the lyrical grace, gentle mood and compassionate warmth pervading the original play. This was the last stroke of Mishima's experimental brush dabbling in the realm of the No.

Needless to say, Mishima's modern No plays caused a heated controversy. Their acceptance or rejection as significant works of art colours one's attitude in the assessment not only of Mishima's entire work but of a great deal of modern Japanese writing. For the nature of these modern versions of No plays constitutes an essential aspect of the spirit of contemporary Japanese literature: groping in a conglomeration of new ideas and old forms; incongruous grafting of half-discovered visions onto semi-forgotten ideals. The polemic interest of these plays as examples of modern creativity is clear: their ultimate value hinges upon whether we accept them as having been born of a genuine inspiration to re-create the traditional, or condemn them as a contrived 'gimmick' amounting virtually to sacrilege.

Leaving aside their controversial character, the Collection of Modern No Plays is generally classed as one of the important landmarks in the development of Mishima's work. The most up-to-date scholarly compilation of a Lexicon of Modern Japanese Literature considers Confessions of a Mask, the Collection of Modern No Plays and The Temple of the Golden Pavilion as the three key works in Mishima's literature. Also, the 1965 Chūkōron edition of A Treasury of Japanese Literature has included in Mishima's volume Confessions of a Mask, The Temple of the Golden Palace.
Pavilion, Towins in the Afternoon and The Collection of Modern No Plays.

Before giving a detailed examination of the Collection of Modern No Plays, I must give a brief sketch of Mishima's career and an overall picture of his voluminous work in order to show, firstly, how his No plays fit into the development of his work, and secondly, how he uses the No plays to present themes which he had been developing in other writings. The scope of this thesis does not allow a thorough examination of any of Mishima's works except his No plays; but I will refer to his novels, short stories, plays and essays, to show his development of ideas, themes and techniques which he uses in the Collection of Modern No Plays.
CHAPTER TWO

ADOLESCENCE, WAR - A DEVELOPING THEME OF 'DEATH AND BEAUTY' IN MISHIMA'S EARLY WORKS AND NOVELS
One of the basic themes recurring in Mishima's literature is the inter-relation of death and beauty. Although it may not be apparent from the brief synopses given in the preceding chapter, a more detailed analyses in subsequent chapters should show that Mishima's modern No plays have a preoccupation with the theme of death and beauty. His life and work have been dominated by the awareness of death and the visions of beauty. This is reflected particularly in his early period from the first collection of short stories to The Temple of the Golden Pavilion. The Collection of Modern No Plays, the first of which was written in the middle of this period, may therefore be viewed in the light of the writer's developing interest in the theme of death and beauty.

There were two main factors in Mishima's formative years determining his predilection for decadent aestheticism and nihilistic obsession with death: the war background and his association with the Japanese Romantic School. Therefore, in order to follow the development of the young writer, it is essential to know some details of the effects the war and the Japanese Romantic School had upon him. Also, the circumstances of Mishima's adolescence, combined with his early acquisition of knowledge of both the Japanese classics and the European literature, throw some light upon his meteoric rise on the literary scene as a precocious genius. He came to prominence virtually in his teens like Raymond Radiguet in France and Colin Wilson in England. Confessions of a Mask, his virgin novel written in 1949 at the age of 24, is still considered by many critics as the most outspoken of Mishima's works, in which the young writer really had something to say. It established his reputation as a precocious genius, which was to follow him throughout his later career. His path as a writer was thus determined in the early stages and an examination of Mishima's literary debut serves as a pointer to the overall picture of his life and work.
In the immediate postwar years, the Japanese critics hailed Mishima as heralding a new era in literature. He was called the 'symbol of a new age'. At the same time, he had created a lasting impression as a young inheritor of the classical style. In this way, his two fundamental characteristics became apparent from the very beginning. First, a child of the war and brought up in the climate of postwar Japan, he belongs to the new generation. Second, his work has a remarkably cosmopolitan character and universal appeal. Hence, he has grown to the stature of the first Japanese 'international' writer. Nevertheless, an added complexity is the fact that he is also deeply rooted in tradition, to the extent that he is often called "a writer of the renaissance of old Japan."

From childhood, Mishima has imbibed the artistic heritage of the Japanese classics, the No, Kabuki and the Puppet Theatre. Apart from his early knowledge of the classical literature, he has always had a great love for the No and Kabuki and has learnt to recite fluently passages from Kabuki and Joruri. On the other hand, he has lived through the experiences of war and the throes of Japan's hyper-modernisation. As a writer and a tragi-heroic figure, Mishima is caught between the two worlds: while steeped in the aesthetic tradition of Japan, he has consciously striven to keep in the forefront of literary avant-garde. Throughout his work he seems to be suspended between a nostalgia for tradition and the zeal of his modernity. Works like the Collection of Modern No Plays and, a Kabuki version of Racine's Phedra, are only extreme examples of his continuous efforts to bridge the gap between the worlds of the classical and the modern Japanese literature.

Mishima was born in Tokyo toward the end of the Taishō Era, on January 14th, 1925 or the fourteenth year of Taishō. His real name is Hiraoka Kimitake. His father,
Azusa was a high official in the Ministry of Forestry, and his mother, Shizue, a housewife. Although he entered the Gakushuin or Peer's School, where he attended the primary, middle and high schools, Mishima's family was a typical middle-class household created by the Bummei Kaika of the Meiji times. So he grew up in the atmosphere of a privileged new bourgeoisie, which had risen to the ranks of semi-aristocracy.

At the Peer's School, Mishima showed an early interest in literature. According to his autobiographical works, he had written many poems and juvenile tales at a very young age and exchanged long 'literary' letters with his friends. His 'virgin work' in the form of a novel, entitled Sukanpo (A Sorrel), was published in the Niwa-kai Magazine of the Peer's School when he was thirteen.

Under the influence of Shimizu Fumio, his professor of Japanese literature who gave him the pen name of Mishima Yukio, he spent his high school days immersed in reading the diaries of the Heian period and other classics. But the range of his voracious reading soon expanded to Western literature. In middle school he read Oscar Wilde, then turned to Tanizaki Junichiro and in his high school days became intimately acquainted with the works of Mori Ogai. He strove to acquire Mori Ogai's perfect style, cool intellect and strong but restrained passion.

The emphasis of the lectures at the Peer's School was primarily on classical literature. Mishima devoted himself to the French classics. By the end of high school he had covered the works of La Fayette, Stendhal and Villiers de L'Isle Adam. Thus he showed an early attraction to medieval mysticism and aestheticism. He also became acquainted with the giants of German literature, Goethe and Thomas Mann. Besides, he discovered Raymond Radiguet, who was later to become his favourite model. So the time he spent...
at the Peer's School served to nourish the young writer's imagination and develop his precocious genius.

While Mishima's early life was confined within the narrow circle of his aristocratic friends and the world of books, the harsh realities of the war were looming in the background, leaving indelible marks upon his character. Their stark picture may be found in a number of Mishima's early works: *Confessions of a Mask, Ai no Kawaki* (The Thirst of Love), etc. Perhaps the most striking is the vivid description of the war disasters given by the blind hero of Mishima's No play *Yoroboshi*:

Toshinori: ... Yes, I certainly saw the end of this world. At the age of five, in the last year of the war, I saw it to that last fire, the flames of which burnt out my eyes. Ever since, the flames of the end of this world have been blazing before my eyes. Many a time I have tried to think as you do that it is only the peaceful sunset scene. But I couldn't. Because what I saw was indeed the scene of this world enveloped in flames.

Look, a multitude of fire is falling from the sky. Every house is going up in flames. Every window of the buildings is belching out flames. I can see it clearly. The sky is full of fire flakes. Low clouds have been dyed the poisonous colour of grapes and these same clouds are reflected in the river, which has a scarlet glow from the fire. The vivid outline of the large rail-road bridge. Big trees enveloped in flames, and the twigs too, completely covered in fire flakes; tragi-heroic figures swaying in the wind. Small trees too, and even the short bamboo grass thicket, are all marked by the imprint of the fire. The imprint of the fire and the fringe of flames flickering everywhere. The world was awfully quiet. Although it was quiet, a roar was echoing from all sides as if I were inside a temple bell. A strange sound like the roaring wind, as if everybody were chanting sutras together. What do you think that was? What do you think it was? It was not words, Mrs. Sakurama, nor a song; agonising cries of human beings in burning hell.

I have never heard such a sweet voice. Never have I heard such a sincere voice. People will not let
you hear such an honest voice except at the end of the world.

This picture of complete devastation and the consciousness of the end of the world became set in the psychological make up of young Mishima. An awareness of death and a streak of nihilism remained permanent features of his later work.

Apart from the scenes of war tragedies one encounters in Mishima’s works, he gives an actual account of the effect of the war on his youth in a book of reminiscences about his life and literary career, entitled Watakushi no Henrei Jidai (My Wandering Age), published in 1964. He says that during the war he lived clinging to his own sensibility, which seemed to him an inevitable way of life at the time. In the same breath, he describes a strange fascination he felt for death and destruction:

Each time the alarm sounded, whilst some brave friends, thinking that they were going to die in any case, continued to sleep resigned to their fate, I always took refuge in the sodden air raid shelter, clinging onto my unfinished manuscript. The air raid on the great city in the distance, which I observed as I raised my head from the hole, looked beautiful ... it was like beholding a distant beacon light of a great feast of extravagant death and destruction.

In Mishima’s own words, death for him assumed the form of something beautiful and mysterious. He sublimated the fears of annihilation into romantic reveries and aesthetic visions. In the war psychosis, the young writer found an outlet in dreaming about beautiful death. And paradoxically enough, he admits that he felt happy in the war climate:

Perhaps it would be true to say that I was really quite happy in those days. There were no worries about pursuing a profession, not even examination anxieties, and the food, though scarce, was supplied; as for the future, scope was non-existent within reach of one’s responsibility, so it goes without saying that I was happy from the aspect of
merely existing, and I was also happy from the aspect of literary work. There were no critics and no competitors, only the enjoyment of one's own output in writing .... I cannot escape the accusation of embellishing the past by calling these conditions happy at this stage. Nevertheless, however accurately I trace back my memories, I cannot recall another period of being so free from feeling the burden of the self. I was, so to speak, in a state of 'non-gravity'. My education was acquired in second-hand bookshops. (In fact, towards the end of the war, one could only buy books in second-hand bookshops.) So, I was living in a small, secure castle. - But with the end of the war, unhappiness suddenly came upon me.

This is a remarkable confession on Mishima's part. For he is not 'recalling accurately' the days of his youth, but smiling bitterly at the present in the light of his strange 'happiness' in wartime. Nakamura Mitsuo 中村光大 takes up this point in an essay about the personality and literature of Mishima Yukio:

This is Mishima's view of his own destiny. It is almost his way of declaring: I am a child of the war. It was the war that made me. This state of 'non-gravity' was akin to a religious ecstasy. Mishima in this way received a holy mark from the war.

In the same chapter of My Wandering Age Mishima says:

Realising what a powerful influence this atmosphere had on a mind in its formative period .... although seventeen years have lapsed since the end of the war, the reality still does not appear certain to me, but somehow fleeting and at times insubstantial. This much may be said to be my innate disposition, but the strong impression that perhaps even tomorrow reality may be destroyed by air raids, in fact, the imprint of an age in which things that existed yesterday may no longer exist today due to air raids, seems hardly likely to be erased in about seventeen years.

The war therefore has a crucial significance for Mishima's personality and his work. It has become a standard cliche among
the Japanese critics to refer to Mishima as a 'child of the war'.
In a discussion about modern Japanese writers, published serially in the *Bungaku-kai* magazine, following up Usui Yoshimi's comment that Mishima was the 'heaven sent child of the Japanese Romantic school; Nakamura Mitsuo said:

> After all, I think the essence of Mishima is the fact that he is a child of the war ... he is entirely different from people who suffered physical harm from the war in their youth; his injuries, one might say, were worse. The war orphans do not make grave faces, do they? They have a blank look - the same as Mishima's. It is a face incomprehensible to others.

Discussing the early period of Ōoka Shōhei and Mishima Yukio, Nakamura Mitsuo pointed out that they represented the climate of the postwar generation and that their works captured the essence of the spiritual confusion following the end of the war.

In Mishima's case, war was the determining factor in the formation of his personality, and his very existence would have been inconceivable without the war. In that sense, it would be more appropriate to call Mishima the child of the war than to say that he is of the war generation; the starting point of his literature was the problem of how to manage the 'child' in him that had been scarred by the war.

In conclusion, it is enough to mention Mishima's own words, which sum up the special significance of the war for his generation:

> Since we have lived our formative years in the midst of war, we have developed our own dangerous weapon with which to face this new age.

Another important factor in Mishima's formative years was his association with the Japanese Romantic School. He first came into contact with the poets and writers of the school through the magazine *Bungei Bunka*. In it, his professor, Shimizu Fumio, introduced Mishima's first collection of short stories
Hanazakari no Mori (The Forest in Full Bloom). According to Mishima's recollections in My Wandering Age, Bungei Bunka was a kind of fort to defend the delicate beauty of the Japanese classics from utilitarian nationalist consciousness on the one hand and Western rationalism on the other hand. The group concentrated particularly on studying the works of Yasuda Yojūro 謹田鷹郞, who upheld the ideology of Emperor worship and advocated the aesthetic blend of the German Romantic School with the Japanese classics. Mishima became intoxicated with the idealism of Yasuda Yojūro and the nationalism of the poet Hayashi Fusao 菊池寛, who provided the main source of inspiration for the young generation in wartime. He has often expressed open admiration for the work of Hayashi Fusao:

As to the whole volume of Seinen (Young Men), I can feel nothing but admiration……

In young men, the author's eye penetrates into the young men's innocence and passion, ideals and fantasy, eccentric pride and utmost sadness, and all weakness, sweetness, courage and self-discipline.

The nationalist sentiments propagated by Hayashi Fusao are deeply rooted in the traditional Japanese mentality. The wartime kamikaze 神風 spirit was an extreme phenomenon springing from the same core. Notions of the Japanese Romantic School were also nationalistic with strong decadent leanings. It seems that the common feeling the Japanese Romantic School gave to the mid-war generation which includes Mishima lay in Medieval beauty, abstruse decadence and mysterious predictions. These were the aspects most suitable for the spiritual climate and life experience of a generation brought up under the oppression.

Okuno Takeo 奥野健男, a prominent critic of modern literature, describes the attitudes of Mishima's generation and the reasons why they turned so readily to embrace the ideals of the Japanese Romantic School:
Mishima's generation, which spent its adolescent period in an age when the outside world, which they could not affect of their own volition at all, and the war, which was carried on at a place quite unrelated to them, were determining their fate; in this situation they learnt the concept of fate. The youngsters accepted their own not too distant death as inevitable, and while still in the beginning of life, they were busy preparing for death, just as farmers hasten with harvesting, to fulfil their lives.

At the same time, the adolescents one after another acquired the technique of keeping the oppressiveness of such gloomy realities far from their consciousness and enjoying their own abstruse pleasures completely isolated from society......

In the medieval beauty and abstruse decadence of the Japanese Romantic School they found the pleasures isolated from society, carnal desire sublimated into art, introverted and unhealthy decadence, and, arising from it all, a glimpse of the brightness of nature in ancient times. 63.

The fact that Mishima belonged to this generation and that during the war he was a young man within the orbit of the Japanese romantic school assumes an important meaning in considering the total development of Mishima's literary personality. His extreme aestheticism and nonchalance for public opinion began at this stage. The Japanese Romantic School was the only literary movement condoning the existing state of affairs and not opposing the war. As a member of the mid-war generation and therefore a direct victim of the wartime oppressions, Mishima had already acquired the knack of the political expedient. He was aware that in order to attain social non-conformity, he had to play the part of a most loyal nationalist on the one hand, while shutting himself off in a private Ivory Tower of Beauty on the other hand. Thus, the Japanese Romantic School and Mishima's indulgence in the classics provided suitable vehicles for his aesthetic egoism.

Okuno Takeo accuses Mishima of opportunistic disregard for society and a nihilistic indulgence in aestheticism. This is the
criticism commonly made against Mishima by the younger generation of critics, especially those trained in democratic or socialist thought:

Mishima Yukio's aesthetic trend, the concept of fatalism, his decorative style of writing, his non-concern for thought, etc., may all be said to have been formed under the influence of the Japanese Romantic School. The extremely lop-sided nature of the scope of his education - his rich knowledge of Japanese literature to begin with, his mature sensitivity and perfect craftsmanship compared with the hollowness of his thought, utter lack of concern for society, and the development of his ego having remained at the kindergarten level - was a general characteristic of that generation, but in Mishima's case, one might say that the trend towards the Japanese Romantic School had made it even more extreme.

It is essential to bear in mind that Mishima belonged to the generation of writers influenced by the nationally inclined Japanese Romantic School who had their formative years during the war, as opposed to the pre-war generation of leftist writers and the postwar schools of predominantly humanist or modernist writers. For this was to determine his future course of remaining aloof from the various postwar literary schools and steering clear from the well-known controversy of 'politics and literature'.

The main characteristics of Mishima's generation were: an excessive cultivation of nationalist sentiments combined with a kind of nihilistic opportunism. The latter was a phenomenon peculiar to the war atmosphere. It was a rebound from underlying despair, the nonchalant bravado of a doomed generation. Mishima himself admits the opportunistic streak in his early youth. Looking back at the circumstance of the publication of his first collection of short stories, Hanazakari no Mori (The Forest in Full Bloom), he recalls the feelings of urgency and a need to create a memento of his short life of only twenty years:
The mood of the students in those days was filled with what might be called a light, cheerful nihilism; so I must admit that at the age of nineteen I was far from unworldly, and as regards literary ambition, I was considerably opportunistic. What I find distasteful on now re-reading the preface to the first edition of the Forest in Full Bloom is that I can see a trace of the opportunist in some part of me, though I would not say it applied to my whole attitude.

Despite all odds against him, Mishima succeeded in getting the book published in late autumn of 1944 at the time of acute air raid crisis. Due to the scarcity of paper, he confesses that, to ensure an adequate supply, he had written an application full of ostentatious phrases like: "To protect the Imperial literature..." At any rate, the supply of paper was granted, and Mishima's 'virgin' collection of short stories appeared, published on a high quality yellow paper.

The narcissism of childhood and adolescence takes advantage of anything. It even profits from the world destruction. The larger the mirror - the better. At the age of twenty, I was able to fancy myself as anything. Even as an ill-fated genius, or the last young lad of the Japanese aesthetic tradition. A decadent in decadence. The last Emperor of the age of decline. Moreover, a special knight in the name of beauty... Carried away by such crazy ideas, I finally identified myself with the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshihisa of Muromachi and began to write my 'last novel', CHUSEI (The Middle Ages), before I should be interrupted by the call-up.

Regardless of the circumstances and motivation behind Mishima's first collection of short stories, the publication of The Forest in Full Bloom created quite a sensation. In his later recollections, Mishima recorded that within a week 4,000 copies had been sold, which made him so happy that he was ready to die. There was little critical appraisal of his work at this time of the approaching disastrous climax of the war. However, later critics of Mishima's
literature have repeatedly referred to it as the starting point of Mishima's aesthetic and classicist trends: For example, Yoshida Seiichi says:

During the war, when I read Mishima Yukio's *Forest in Full Bloom*, published serially in the *Bungei Bunka*, I remember feeling something like a stream of refined light amongst the oppressive atmosphere of the age. Contrary to clear, vigorous and healthy writing, it was mysterious and medieval, a decadent dream sheltering under the shadow of aestheticism.

Mishima himself later said that his early works, from the *Forest in Full Bloom* to *The Middle Ages* were written in a "semi-sober and semi-intoxicated state" of boyhood and created around the time when he was in "a trance-like state day and night". Hence they are marked by excessive sentimentalism and aesthetic dreams. Their subject matter consists mainly of imaginary episodes and romantic love stories of medieval times. *The Middle Ages*, for instance, is a drama of death enacted by young No actors and a beautiful witch, with the Shogun Yoshihisa (Mishima's own projected image) as the central figure. It is a blend of the gloomy and the beautiful, a product of Mishima's interest in the No combined with a Wilde type of aestheticism. Its condensed style relies heavily on the No plays, but it is also pervaded with the European fin-de-siecle atmosphere.

Yoshida Seiichi points out that these stories were the expression of Mishima's turning away from harsh reality to embrace the atmosphere of the classics. While displaying an excess of useless embellishments, they are works of remarkable talent and accomplishment for a young man of twenty. To say the least, they show how conversant Mishima already was with the vocabulary and the sentiments of the Heian literature.

In the account of his first acquaintance with Mishima's *Forest in Full Bloom*, Jinzai Kiyoshi 神西清 describes how the
work made him think of the second arrival of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. He felt it signified the revival of the Heian style in modern times, for it not only contained a Yamato core, but also had a poetic feeling accompanied by a special noble fragrance. Hence, Jinzai saw in Mishima a "legitimate inheritor of our aristocratic art."

What I want to say is that young Mishima Yukio had already splendidly mastered the sentiments and the vocabulary of the Heian literature. Compared with the literary youth of recent days (or indeed, from much longer ago,) who adopted as their starting point the Naturalism of the late Meiji period at the most, or more recently, the literature of Shiga Naoya and Kasai Zenzō, or, more recently still, American authors works churned out in the mass production translation factories, this was a strikingly unique feature. Part of the reason why Mishima Yukio was called an 'extraordinary creature' undoubtedly has its hidden roots here.

The most significant aspect of The Forest in Full Bloom is Mishima's style of writing. Mishima is said to have changed his style a number of times in his continuous effort to polish and improve it. From the excessively flowery style of his early short stories overflowing with classical influences, he changed to a sophisticated, polished style of Latin writers with a strong emphasis on psychology in his postwar novels. Later he adopted a more severe style of Germanic writers. According to the writer himself, the turning point in his approach to literature was the time he decided to acquire Mori Ōgai's "lucid, intellectual style". Many other changes may be traced in the precipitous course of Mishima's literature from The Forest in Full Bloom to the 1965 Art's Festival winner, a play entitled Sado Koshaku-Fujin (The Marchioness of Sade).

However, as has been pointed out by various critics, The Forest in Full Bloom contains in germinal form what was to become
Mishima’s characteristic style of writing in his subsequent works. For example, the passage quoted below indicates already Mishima’s rich use of metaphors, discovery of non-poetic beauty and a strange combination of images:

At the home of his birth, a train whistle was often heard echoing late in the night. To the ears of the child, who could not fall asleep frightened by the intricate wood grains of the ceiling boards, it sounded somewhat like a gentle, strange gorgeousness, far too feeble for a noise. It was just like an unexpected sound of the bustling city in the background. Autumn mist, like a herd of white beasts, was heard coming in through the back door. It spread like soundless fireworks. At the other side of the thin mist bell-flowers were lonely whitish, like a pattern of a hemp quilt ....

Such descriptions, found at random throughout the collection, stamp the seal of Mishima’s style and indicate some of his fundamental techniques in the use of words.

Mishima’s appearance on the literary scene with a flourish of medieval aestheticism was extremely conspicuous in the immediate postwar period. The trends of Japanese literature at the time may be generally described as the process of escaping from tradition. The first wave of postwar literature was predominantly that of the proletarian writers gathered around the Kindai Bungaku magazine, who were at last able to give vent to their anti-traditionalist attitude and ideas of social criticism. The second wave came from the younger generation who saw the future through a rose coloured dream of democratic revolution and the establishment of the modern ego. The dispute between the two groups developed along the lines of the ‘art for life’s sake’ versus ‘art for art’s sake’ controversy of ‘politics and literature’. Mishima’s ‘lost generation’ of mid-war youth was caught in the rift between the two currents.
The end of the war meant for Mishima the collapse of his Ivory Tower. He was no longer able to play the role of a young man who posed as a prodigy in a small group. He was suddenly placed in the position of having to shoulder responsibility for the future. In My Wandering Age, he describes the postwar conflict between his cherished ideals and the spirit of the age:

... Society outside was like a storm, and the literary circles, in turn, were confronting an age comparable with the raging billows under a hurricane. In my heart, I too felt inclined to ride upon such waves, but the reputation of the small war-time group etc. had disappeared like bubbles floating on stagnant water, the dream of believing oneself to be the very symbol of the age had vanished too, and I discovered at the early age of twenty that I had been left behind by the times. In this situation, I too was completely bewildered.

Radiguet, Wilde, Yeats and the Japanese classics, everything I had grown up loving, turned out to be contrary to the mores of the age. It may seem an exaggeration but during the war, oddly enough, one could secretly cherish private likes and dislikes, whereas the postwar society suddenly reopened a free market of wild thought and artistic ideas, and such became the age that the society threw overboard one after another all things incompatible with its actual make up.

Thus, when the war ended, Mishima confesses to have been overcome with a "terrible sense of powerlessness". He had grown up in wartime continuously drawn by death while running away from death. It is interesting to observe that even his enthusiasm for the No, Kokinshū 古今集 and other classics, was basically motivated by this ambivalent attraction to death and his discovery of 'dangerous beauty'. But with the end of the war, the imminence of death was no longer an ever-present factor in life, so Mishima could not help feeling that something was lacking.

Instead, the chaos of 'emancipation' and 'revolution' had set in. The thirst for freedom, suppressed throughout the war, was
stimulated artificially by the military occupation. On the other hand, society was beset by a succession of artificial developments imposed by the American Occupation policies.

The complexity of the postwar situation in Japan is a separate subject for future historians to unravel. Its effect on people has been of epoch-making significance in Japanese history, and yet remains to be fully assessed. Critics have noted that one reason for Mishima's rapid success was the fact that he seemed to have had a more penetrating insight into the character of this age than any other writer at the time. In his supersensitive way, he responded to the climate of the new age in the light of his inner consciousness, while holding on to his adolescent ideals. For this reason, he was often accused of being a-political.

In his failure in any way to change his wartime ideas after the war, Mishima stands out as one of the few such writers to be found in Japan. But the important point here is that this was due to a natural attitude, derived almost from his inborn disposition, rather than being based on his political convictions.

The postwar conflict in Mishima developed from a state of bewilderment to the positive stand of defiance. In a series of short stories and essays published after his first collection, he develops the theme of his resentment and feeling of alienation from society. For example, in the story *A Dangerous Weapon of Serious Patients*, he says:

I consider it a matter of pride that a great number of robber gangs came out of my own generation.

Since we have lived our formative years in the midst of war, we have developed our own 'dangerous weapon' with which to face this new age. Just as the gangs of young robbers pilfered pistols from the army - which are now the basic tools of their trade - we too, had no other way but to entrust our literature to a similar illegal 'dangerous weapon'.
The 'dangerous weapon' that Mishima had been sharpening during the war and proceeded to flourish after the war was "a dagger of beauty". According to Jinzai Kiyoshi, Mishima assumed the attitude of a distinct challenger after the war. From his wartime role of a 'martyr of beauty' he turned into a 'slaughterer with beauty' and began to demolish the ugly phenomena of postwar life. With Quixotic fervour he hurled himself at all kinds of enemies:

postwar manners, the vulgarity of the 'setting sun' circles, sentimentality, the stupidity of women and the impurity of spirit in all its fragmented parts.

In another short story entitled *Excerpts from a Philosophical Diary Left by a Habitual Murderer*, the murderer says:

Murder means my growing up. To murder is my discovery. It is a means of approaching the forgotten life. I dream: how beautiful is murder in the great confusion. A murderer is the reverse side of the Creator. His greatness is his commonness, his joy and sorrow are one and the same thing.

Indeed, Mishima's stand in the postwar scene was that of a merciless murderer. During the war he had adopted the attitude of conformity as a convenient guise for his feeling of estrangement from society, but in the confusion of the postwar society he assumed a stand of opposition to secure a place for himself. Nakamura Mitsuo sees Mishima's postwar defiance in this light:

This is because opposition was the most generally adopted, commonplace attitude in a postwar society of professed 'freedom' and the people who failed to adopt it were regarded as renegades from the trends of the new age. Mishima's clear originality or non-conformity, recognised by all the people, was turned against the very age that encouraged opposition. So, cutting right across the way of life he had consistently pursued during war-time, Mishima succeeded in making it appear the opposite. Just as his former conformity meant resistance, his
opposition now assumed the guise of conformity. The writer's inner constitution is the same, only both extremes, formerly limited by the range of his ideas, are now enlarged by the dimensions of existing realities. In Mishima's case, this was a matter of living and growing up.

For a while after the war Mishima was shaken out of his complacency in his vocation as a writer, though he continued writing short stories copiously. In 1946, through the kindness of Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成, who was impressed by Mishima's ingenious use of metaphors and unusual combinations of images along the lines of the New Perceptionist School, he got the story Tobacco published in the Ningen magazine. It was a delicate piece of prose describing the events of his school years at the Peer's School and hinting at the first discoveries of his childhood homosexual reveries. In the same year, he began writing his first long novel Tozoku 盗賊 (The Thief), which ended as an unsuccessful attempt to "cope with a work of the same magnitude and at the same age as Raymond Radiguet" (Collected Works, Vol. 1. - postscript). Finally, it was published in the fragmentary form as short pieces under the title Jisatsu Kitesha 自殺企図者 (The Suicide Scheemer) in the Bungaku Kaigi 文學會議.

Thus Mishima's literary talents blossomed first in the realm of the short story, by which he attracted the attention of literary circles with his youthful cynicism and precocious abilities. He was no longer a poet confined to his small Ivory Tower of medieval aestheticism but the author of ingenious sketches of the postwar conditions. The profusion of his output between the publication of Tobacco and the commencement of serial publication of his fame winning novel Confessions of A Mask in July, 1949 is remarkable for a youth in his early twenties: he produced about twenty stories and many essays, which were published in the current literary magazines.
In November, 1948 his first play Kataku 火宅 (The Burning House) was published in the Ningen magazine, and in December, the same year, the famous story Shishi 獅子 (The Lioness), based on Euripides' Medea, was published in the Jokyoku 戲曲 dramatic journal. These were the first indications of Mishima's dramatic style, the beginnings of his development as an outstanding playwright as well.

Meanwhile, Mishima graduated from the Faculty of Law in the Tokyo Imperial University with First class honours, conferred upon him as the best student by the Emperor's signature. Two months later, in January, 1949 he entered the employment of the Finance Ministry, but he resigned from public service in September of the same year to embark on the life of a professional writer - never to look back.

Mishima's own works are the best material for reconstructing the patterns of his life and the nature of his growth. His early novels particularly contain many autobiographical details. The circumstances of his childhood, school age and youth up to the time of graduating from the Tokyo Imperial University are described in his first generally successful novel Confessions of A Mask. The novel was an attempt at self-analysis through the act of literary creation, a kind of hybrid of The Picture of Dorian Gray and Raymond Radiguet's Le Bal du Comte D'Orgei. It was acclaimed as the first Japanese version of a Gide-style, psycho-analytical novel, very much in vogue at that time in France and other Western countries. The controversy it stirred up among the Japanese critics was concerned mainly with the problem whether the novel represented an abstract or a real but deformed self-portrait. To say the least, it was an extraordinary feat of self-discovery. A closer examination of the Confessions of A Mask is essential for comprehension of Mishima's personality and his later work:
Confessions of A Mask is a representative work of Mishima's early period, in which the writer, having restored his spiritual equilibrium once lost in the overwhelming 'unhappiness' of the war defeat, for the first time applies all his strength to coming to grips with a long piece. A turning point in his career as an author was an order for a novel to be published expressly in book form, which came precisely at the time he had made up his mind to resign from the Finance Ministry and establish himself in the world as a writer.

In My Wandering Age, Mishima reminisces:

Having left the Public Service I had misgivings whether I would be able to make a living, but thinking quite rationally, I re-assured myself through the following kind of logic:

- At any rate, I am doing all right now!
- I am not certain about five or six years later!
- But to make sure that it will be all right in five or six years' time, I must now devote all my resources to the work of laying down proper foundations.

For that reason, considering it indispensable to take exercise in order to keep myself fit... I joined the Palace Riding club, and, just as luck would have it, I received a request from the Kawade Shobo publishing company for a new novel at about the same time. This request was to me as truly opportune as a boat in which to cross the river.

The main themes of a writer are often said to be present already in his early work. Mishima's Confession of A Mask is a case in point. It is his first novel successful both in Japan and in Western countries, and represents the culmination of the early phase of Mishima's literary development. A semi auto-biographical novel describing the sexual development from childhood to adolescence of the hero, it goes much deeper than Mori Ōgai's Vita Sexualis. The outward personal history of the son of an upper class Tokyo family corresponds with the author's life story.
However, this is neither an autobiography nor a confessional story in the proper sense. In sharp contrast to Shiga Naoya's *Anyakoro* (A Dark Night's Journey), which stops at a simple narration of reminiscences, Mishima's novel was an attempt at depth self-analysis.

Many writers, each in his own way, have written 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'. In writing this novel, 'I' - as the person who is writing - is treated completely abstractly. Throughout the work the author does not appear on the stage. But life as described here is of such a nature that it would collapse in the twinkling of an eye without the trimmings of art. Therefore, even assuming that everything in the novel is based on fact if it were not written as the life of an artist, it could not possibly exist but would be an altogether meaningless construction. I thought of creating a completely fictional confession. The title *Confessions of A Mask* implies such a meaning.

The originality of Mishima's method consists in discovering a mechanism, by which he makes the reader believe that he is raising a mask; that is to say, he adopts an alibi as author to be able to relate his spiritual crisis by attributing the story to the other 'I' in the novel, thus preserving his own freedom. Instead of analysing his own inner life, the writer makes the hero 'I' appear on the scene under strict orders to stop short of expressing organic life and thus presents a perfect caricature of the hero. While relating a history of sexual perversion, the writer described a strange distortion of the spirit, in which sex was just one factor. Thus the theme of the novel is the unhappiness and isolation of a youth who actually saw the face of death during the war and carried the imprint of it after the war. It is a self-portrait of a generation that suffered the postwar feelings of loss and emptiness. In Mishima's own words:

This is a posthumous work bequeathed to the domain of death, in which I had until then been dwelling.
The process of writing this book was to me a suicidal process of turning myself inside out. If jumping to death were filmed and screened in reverse, the person who committed suicide would come flying back to life from the bottom of the ravine to the top of the cliff. I attempted such a technique of recovery by writing this book.

While based on the author's experiences during the war, the novel does not indulge in descriptions of paradoxes and sufferings of the war, which were the favourite themes of most other writers at that time. Mishima later wrote that the memory of the war was to him something "utterly aesthetic". The search for extraordinary beauty is indeed an important theme of Confessions of a Mask. Mishima prefaces the novel with the motto taken from Dostoevskii's The Brothers Karamazov:

Beauty is a terrible and awful thing; It is terrible because it never has and it never can be fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Within beauty both shores meet and all contradictions exist side by side....

...The dreadful thing is that beauty is not only terrifying but also mysterious. God and the Devil are fighting there, and their battlefield is the heart of man. But man's heart wants to speak only of its own ache. Listen, now I'll tell you what it says.

The closed circle of Beauty, Evil and Death was to remain an underlying theme throughout Mishima's later writing. His two other key works, Collection of Modern No Plays and The Temple of the Golden Pavilion are constructed around the same triangle.

However, the story of Mishima's 'heart-ache', or the plot of the novel is almost trivial. It revolves around the process of the awakening of 'I' to his homosexual inclinations. At the age of five, the boy has a strange sensation of being attracted by the imposing, healthy appearance of a night-soil-man. His first sexual excitement occurs on seeing the picture of St. Sebastian
bound naked to the trunk of the tree. His childhood visions of "princes slain", Joan of Arc mounted on a white horse looking like a young knight, etc. are described in a flowery style interspersed with rich and colourful metaphors. Of all the fairy tales, which the boy reads avidly, he is captivated most by Andersen's Rose-Elf, in which a beautiful youth:

while kissing the rose given him as a token by his sweetheart, was stabbed to death and decapitated by a villain with a big knife.

Again,

out of Wilde's numerous fairy tales, it was only the corpse of the young fisherman in The Fisherman and His Soul, washed up on the shore clasping a mermaid to his breast, that captivated me.

Thus, Mishima's 'I' confesses that:

my heart's leaning toward Death and Night and Blood would not be denied.

In the second half of the story, the hero's conceptual love towards a class-mate's sister is depicted against the background of the war. But this youth, who feels the kiss to be a devil's order, cannot experience in reality a love towards women. So the girl, Sonoko, marries another man.... One day in late summer after the end of the war, the hero meets her again, takes her to a rough-and-tumble dance hall, but ends up being aroused by the torso of a barbarous-looking young man. The story ends with this final admission of the hero's true sexual disposition.

This kind of bold exposure was completely new and provocative in Japan. It caused Mishima a great deal of adverse criticism even in the postwar climate of spiritual confusion, and his literature was branded as the 'literature of narcissism'. For example, Fukuda Tsuneari comments:

Abundant barrenness - that is the feeling it creates. A simple-minded, evil fiction. An adult while being a child. A man of common sense...
with the ability of an artist. An impostor making a model work. Indeed, if one could say that an artist is a person who has nothing else apart from talent, in other words, if an artist were perhaps an impostor, this would be such a case.

At the same time, the stark-naked frankness of the novel accounts for its general popularity with the readers. Unlike the 'I-novelists', Mishima had no intention of seeking the readers' sympathy. Hence, he did not mind even if his creative objectives were misunderstood. But having turned his back on the so-called 'I-novel', Mishima had much to gain. Confessions of a Mask is a novel of confession, but it does not contain in the slightest the feelings of self-pity, which form the basis of many 'I-novels'. The beauty of the novel lies in the fact that the motives which urged Mishima to write it, or his power of romantic imagination, and the felt burden of his own existence, are balanced and integrated into a poetic reality.

The most important feature of the novel is a description of the elusive consciousness of beauty that negates reality and is remote from the common human experience. This is a theme Mishima develops in his later works to reach the climax of masterful expression in The Temple of the Golden Pavilion. Also, the fact that it was necessary for Mishima to frame this self-portrait in the realm of beauty adorned with paradox and aphorism, is a clear indication of the line of development of his character as a writer.

In conclusion, the novel is generally recognised as an important landmark in Mishima's literary work. The Lexicon of Modern Japanese Literature sums up its significance:

Confessions of a Mask, carrying through the considerations of methodology, was an experimental novel to determine the self-portrait of the age. It already contained all kinds of Mishima's potential qualities, and it represents a phenomenon
of high attainment in Mishima's career as a writer. 102.

In the same way that the vogue of writing a 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' gave Mishima the idea for the Confessions of a Mask Francois Mauriac's Le Désert de l'Amour served as a model for Ai no Kawaki 爱の渴き (The Thirst of Love). It is a continuation of the former novel in the sense that Mishima again places the greatest importance on the psychological analysis of the main character. Another experimental novel, it is an attempt to embody in the heroine's image the paradoxical concept of 'happiness of a soulless being' and adapt it to the Japanese climate. The theme of the novel is the psychological background and motivation for the actions of the heroine Etsuko.

Ai-no Kawaki is the story of the woman whose husband purposely made her taste the humiliation of the pangs of jealousy. After the husband's death, the perverse heroine indulges in a relationship with the father-in-law who already has one foot in the grave, seducing at the same time a simple young servant, whom she finally kills. Her attachment for the youth, Saburo 宋, is depicted with great depth and subtlety. Etsuko 悦子, who inflicts wounds with her nails on the torso of dancing Saburo, is basically the same type of person as the hero of Confessions of a Mask, who is possessed with a desire to stick a knife into the stomach of a youth dancing in the dancing hall.

The novel is a marked improvement on the Confessions of a Mask because the description of secondary characters is handled with greater skill. Although characters like Sonoko 园子 and Omi 近江, appearing in the Confessions of a Mask, leave a strong impression, they remain just passing phenomena seen through the eyes of the hero, while the characters surrounding the heroine of The Thirst of Love are masterfully portrayed.
The Thirst of Love is one of the most successful of Mishima's novels. Its build up of climax is handled superbly. One cannot help admiring the way Mishima's skill has blossomed. Only in the last scene the technique is carried too far, and when Etsuko kills Saburō, the image that has been created with so much trouble crumbles to pieces.

As a subject matter of the next novel, Mishima used the material from a well known incident which had become a current topic of discussion. Ao no Jidai 青の時代 (The Green Age), published in the Shincho 新潮 from July to December, 1950 was based on a journalistic account of the suicide of Yamazaki 山崎, a law student of Tokyo University and the president of a credit company associated with the Nihon 光 club. This is the first of a series of works in which Mishima uses people from actual life as models for his heroes: Shinsetsu na Kikai 親切な機械 - (The Kind Machine), was based on the murder of a girl student of Kyoiku Daigaku 教育大学 (Education University); Kinkakuji 金閣寺 - (The Temple of the Golden Pavilion), generally acclaimed as Mishima's first masterpiece, was based on the 1950 incident of burning down the Golden Pavilion, and portrayed a stuttering acolyte who was the culprit of the incident; a recent novel Kinmeisatsu 銀と明察 (Silk and Insight), based on the famous Ômi Keshi Jiken 近江鉄条事件 and published serially in the Gunzo 群像 magazine, used as a model Mr. Natsukawa 夏川 the president of Ômi Silk Company; Mikumano Mode 三浦野皓, was based on the episode from the life of the famous scholar Ōbei 折口信夫; Mishima's controversial work Utage no Ato 真のあと (After the Banquet) exposed the private life of a famous political figure, for which the author was sued and fined in 1964. In all these works, Mishima had relied largely on his imagination and original ideas to create human images after the models taken from actual life. In other words, he followed the classical method of conveying his own thoughts through the medium of a story well known
The characteristic of all these models is that they were personalities of strong will, original ideas and extreme self-insight. Their anti-social acts sprang from their ideas about life and had a striking character of inevitability. Hence, they are somehow reminiscent of Dostoyevskii's Raskolnikov type. For example, the young acolyte who had burnt down the Golden Pavilion was reported in the newspapers to have said clearly that he had committed the act out of envy towards beauty. Again, the model of *The Green Age* has left the following suicidal note published in the *Asahi Weekly*:

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Having made an agreement to pay up the creditor on the 25th of November, I am bound to fulfil the contract. I am compelled to fulfil it not on moral but on legal grounds. To avoid this obligation, the only rule is a change of circumstances. A contract binds living people, but it does not apply to the dead. I am going to die in order to bring about the situation when the rule of a change of circumstances applies. By changing into a dead person, I am completing a theoretical consolidation. 103.
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Mishima was no doubt impressed by this kind of intense stoicism, which makes a man capable of staking even his own life to remain faithful to his ideas. Out of the strange incident that occurred in reality, he created a human image representative of the new postwar spirit. What is truly alive in the novel is not the shabby ghost of a students' Shylock, but of course, a product of Mishima's imagination.

The hero of *The Green Age*, Yamazaki Makoto, is a man of extremely strong self-insight. He sees love, progress, revolution and almost all strivings of people in this world only as mild compromises. He dreams of heroism in which mind reigns supreme. Unlike the progressive postwar intellectuals, he considers people above all as anti-social individuals, and to him, the
preservation of the power of mind becomes the greatest ideal in life. In so far as the spiritual intercourse with others is ultimately impossible, to preserve the self-regulating nature of the mind, he considers it best to keep the relationships with people as rigorous as possible. He dreams of:

The kind of utopia, where people, apart from understanding money and talking about money, have neither an obligation nor a right to understand each other.

Makoto runs a credit company, and, facing ruin, he decides to commit suicide. But Mishima sees him as a man of complete integrity and purity of heart, and extolls the fact that he committed suicide for 'theoretical consolidation'.

In that context, The Green Age may be taken as a story of the victory of the 'invincible mind'. But the hero of the novel, who has turned his back on the world and gone to the extreme of absolutism of mind and individuality, has no compensation for his own principle in life. When he sets his mind on death, he is suddenly overcome with a feeling of execration towards his own fate as a heretic. For the common people of the world and the opportunists he had despised, are in fact more real than he himself.

Mishima's message seems to be that because of excessive self-awareness people come to lead an abnormal existence devoid of the true nature of human life. On the other hand, by unconscious deeds and faith people are able to merge into the basic nature of life. In that sense, he says, any faith is better than skepticism, and action is better than the consciousness of the self.

In the preface of the novel, Mishima called The Green Age 'a novel of counterfeit action'. This is because he described in it a process by which the lost postwar youth in its self-consciousness comes to realise that life has a character of their own
counterfeit. The hero of *The Green Age*, who personifies Mishima's theory about his generation, is the purest symbol of the postwar spirit of confusion and lack of faith. For the generation which had to make a start from doubting all established values, the purity of spirit signified the arrogant self-assertiveness of the ego. Makoto says:

> A struggle to gain the power of contempt is a conquest. My objective in wanting to master a certain value, goes no further than merely a desire to hold that value in contempt.

This is a logic of arrogance and his extreme stoicism that makes him even stake his life to remain consistently rational. In the hero of *The Green Age*, there is a form of sick rationalism developed to the point of irrational implacability.

An interesting parallel can be drawn here with Mishima's earlier novels. The secret yearning for 'normality' of the abnormal hero of *Confessions of a Mask* has something in common with the yearning for 'purity' of the hero of *The Green Age*. Also, the conflicting relationship of Makoto in *The Green Age* and Yasushi 安, an ordinary man of action, is parallel with the relationship of Etsuko, a woman in despair, and Saburō, the object of her love. The same pattern continues in Mishima's next novel, *Kinjiki* 情色 (The Forbidden Lust), published in two parts; first part, in November, 1951 and second part in September, 1953. Hinoki Shunsuke 榎枝 at of *The Forbidden Lust* is the extension of Makoto 安 of *The Green Age*, both an embodiment of the extreme form of the spirit of a faithless age. On the other hand, Shunsuke's opposite Yuichi 安, is the embodiment of health and beauty. In these novels, Mishima idolises heroes who are handsome but intrinsically evil. His theme of death and beauty changes to its variation of evil and beauty.
As mentioned earlier, it was after the war that Mishima experienced for the first time the feelings of disharmony with the world. This was the beginning of his true drama, created by the conflict of the self with the world. In *Confessions of a Mask*, Mishima discovered a clue to his inner drama. It was the vision of beauty and death caught up in the very contradictions of life. However, since he wrote *Confessions of a Mask*, Mishima's feeling of disharmony with the world has continued to deepen. At the same time, it was no longer an object of indiscriminate longing, but gradually assumed the form of a unified ideal of contradictions and discord. Eventually, the thesis of Death and Beauty and the contradictions of existence have assumed a definite, clear form in *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*.

Meanwhile, a significant change had taken place in Mishima's literary course. Instead of continuing to portray the postwar generation in the trend of *The Thirst of Love*, *The Green Age*, *The Thief* and *The Forbidden Lust*, he had turned to Greek and Japanese classics for inspiration. Consequently, the classicist leanings in his work became prominent again. The key to this development is the writer's aesthetic quest. Both his love of Greece and his ties with the Japanese classics are closely related to Mishima's perennial search for beauty. In *Confessions of a Mask* he mentions that his yearning for Greece began when he saw the sculpture of a beautiful, young Greek God in childhood. Moreover, in *My Wandering Age*, Mishima explains that he was drawn to Greek literature because there was no 'spirit' in it but merely the "balance of flesh and mind", and because he saw perfect beauty arising out of the tension of this balance. In an attempt to capture such beauty, Mishima wrote his first prize-winning novel, *The Sound of Waves*, based on the Greek story of *Daphnis and Chloe* and adorned with an idyllic setting of a Japanese fishing village. The novel is a poetic expression of Mishima's yearning for beautiful, healthy youth and an embodiment of his concepts of the classical Greek beauty. In
contrast, the Collection of Modern No Plays, written in the same period of Mishima's 'return to classicism', are a continuation of his fundamental pursuit of beauty which is tinged with nihilistic associations with death. According to his own words, among all the Japanese classics, he found an ideal in the No plays: "a perfect blend of death and beauty." This statement indicates that Mishima's adaptations of the No plays follow the basic line of his thematic development from Confessions of a Mask to The Temple of the Golden Pavilion.

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion is based on the concrete material from actuality and carries out convincingly Mishima's methodology of borrowing 'classical events' from life to turn them into a purely conceptual work of art. The events that had actually occurred, have come to life in the novel, existing within the frame of the inner laws of the novel.

The story unfolds in the form of a psychological monologue by the hero, a young acolyte Mizoguchi, who is the eventual culprit in the incident of burning down the Golden Pavilion. Mizoguchi has been told by his father about the beauty of the Golden Pavilion from childhood. Afflicted by the feelings of estrangement from the outside world because of his handicap of stuttering, he becomes an acolyte at the Golden Pavilion and is completely controlled by its abstract beauty. He is torn between his yearnings for the beauty of the Golden Pavilion and a rising feeling of compulsion to destroy it. The vision of the Golden Pavilion becomes an insurmountable obstruction even in his attempts to make love and thus establish a contact with life. His feelings of estrangement and isolation deepen, for while being obsessed by beauty, he is unable to stretch out his hand towards life. The Golden Pavilion is the symbol of beauty and eternity and woman is the symbol of life. Mishima's theme here is clearly the tragic relation between beauty and life, the conflict between
the artist's vision of beauty and the contradictions of life.

Since the thought that forms the essence of Mishima's literature would probably revolve around the question of 'what is beauty?', The Temple of the Golden Pavilion may be said to be a work occupying the central position in Mishima's literature. Apart from the fact that the entire novel is constructed around the theme of the relationship between beauty and life, eternity and death, symbolised by destruction, there are many passages in The Temple of the Golden Pavilion throwing important light on Mishima's ideas on beauty. The most characteristic is perhaps the interpretation of the Zen koan "Nansen killed the cat" by Kashiwagi 佐木 , a club-footed acolyte and an eccentric friend of the hero:

Beauty, yes, how can I put it? Beauty is like a decayed tooth. It rubs against the tongue, gets in the way and hurts one insisting on its own existence. In the end, when one can no longer bear the pain, one gets the dentist to pull the tooth out. Then, placing the small, brown, dirty, blood-stained tooth in one's hand, one is likely to look at it and say: 'Is this it? Is this what it was like? That thing which caused me so much pain, which made me constantly anxious about its existence, which had its roots doggedly planted within me, is now merely a dead object. But is that thing really the same as this object? If this was originally my outer existence, why - by what sort of karma - did it become tied up with my inner existence, and how was it able to become the source of my pain? What is the basis of this creature's existence? Was the basis within me? Or was it within this creature itself? And yet, this creature which has been pulled out of me and is now lying in my hand, this is altogether something different. Surely it cannot be that?

Do you see? That's what beauty is like. Therefore, to have killed the cat seems just like having pulled out a painful tooth or having gouged out beauty. Yet one does not know for sure whether it had been a final solution. For since the roots of beauty had not been eradicated, even though the
kitten was dead, the beauty of the cat might not have died at all. Hence, Joshu put those shoes on his head to ridicule the glibness of this solution. He knew, so to speak, that there was no other solution but to endure the pain of the decayed tooth.

Although the hero is mentally ill, the aim of the novel is to make the reader feel that he had no other way but to burn down the Golden Pavilion, the symbol of beauty, which had made him suffer for so long interfering with his attempts to love and live fully. The act of destroying the Golden Pavilion is presented as the hero's revenge for his ugly stutterer's face and for his incurable isolation from life. The novel ends with the words:

I felt like a man who settles down for a smoke after a job of work. I wanted to live.

Here, the analysis and adulation of beauty, appearing in a variety of aspects in Mishima's literature, reaches a kind of grand conclusion.

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion is the work in which Mishima extricated himself from the past and its phantoms and, stepping on firm ground, stood ready to proceed into the future. In his later works, he gradually turns from the past to the future. The 'postwar' aspect for Mishima has come to an end. But the estrangement of his 'self' continues. Throughout his later works, Mishima coolly penetrated the growing alienation of his 'self' from reality. However, the point of emphasis shifts from death to life, and the concept of beauty changes to something even more stable.

The novel is superbly constructed from the suggestive episode in the first chapter, through the carefully selected events contributing to the hero's mounting urge to destroy the symbol of the obsessive vision of beauty, down to the climactic scene when he finally sets the Golden Pavilion on fire. The writer...
follows his plan impeccably, developing the story at a continuous rising degree of intensity to a most effective close.

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion is generally considered as one of Mishima's greatest masterpieces and a brilliant product of his painstaking methodology. It displays the writer's outstanding talent for composition, his penetrating psychological insight and the versatility of his pen. But Mishima's extraordinary power of structure and his consummate literary skill are noticeable in plays even more than in his novels.

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The foregoing aspects of Mishima's adolescence and early work have been selected in order to show: how he rose to fame as a precocious genius; how the war background and the influence of the Japanese Romantic School had left the permanent imprint of nihilistic obsession with death on Mishima, which was to pervade his later work; and, that the aesthetic quest has been the main driving force behind his literature. These factors would appear to be of basic importance when considering Mishima's development as a writer and they set the proper perspective for examining the Collection of Modern Nō Plays. Before presenting an analysis of Mishima's adaptations of the Nō plays, however, it will be necessary to give a general idea of his dramatic style in plays and novels and to examine some of his techniques as a playwright.
CHAPTER THREE

THE DRAMATIC IN MISHIMA -
HIS ART OF BORROWING
Mishima made his name as a playwright with the Collection of Modern No Plays. When he began writing modern No plays, he had only two one-act plays to his credit: Kataku 火宅 (The Burning House), 1948, and Seijo 聖女 (A Saintly Woman), 1949. Today, he is one of the leading and most prolific playwrights in Japan. Nevertheless, although some of his long plays have been translated, (Yoru no Himawari 夜の向日葵 - Twilight Sunflower, 1952 and Nettaiju 熱帯樹 - Tropical Tree, 1960), he has never been acclaimed to the same extent as when his No adaptations won international success. The Collection of Modern No Plays may therefore be said to mark both the debut and the high point of Mishima's career as a dramatist.

While Mishima set his hand to writing plays relatively late, he had always shown a keen sense of drama in his novels. In fact, his prose works largely fall into the category of dramatic novels. He has often expressed the belief that writing plays is his true vocation. Yet, he began by a re-appraisal of the classics, almost groping his way in the dark, for he had had no proper training in dramaturgy. Although his modern No plays are a unique experiment in the creation of a poetic drama from the classical models, some of the techniques used in them, their main weaknesses and good points are characteristic of Mishima's plays in general. Briefly, these may be outlined as follows: Mishima's conscious dramatic methodology often leads to melodramatic solutions and contrived plots. His characters are mostly unconvincing, because Mishima uses them as types, symbols or mouthpieces for his ideas. There is an abundance of artificial symbols in his plays, representing the writer's themes and ideas. In dialogue and the use of language Mishima displays great versatility and poetic talent. His stage settings are imaginative and diverse. Both his novels and plays are either based on some models or full of hints from Japanese and Western sources. Borrowing is thus one of Mishima's main techniques, which is best exemplified by his adaptations of the
This chapter is concerned with Mishima's concept of the dramatic as revealed in some of his autobiographical essays, short stories, novels and plays.

In My Wandering Age Mishima explains his ardent enthusiasm for drama since childhood. He had grown up in an atmosphere conducive to cultivation of the love of theatre. His maternal grandmother used to learn No chanting of the Kanze school and she often took him to see No performances. In this connection, Mishima claims a strange coincidence:

Perhaps it was an accidental choice, but the first Kabuki I saw was that solemn Daijo 大序 , and the first No play I saw was the kami-asobi 神遊 of Ama-no-Iwato 天の岩戸 , - which may be said to be a proof that I received a special favour from the God of Japanese entertainment arts.

So Mishima believes himself to have an inborn genius for drama. He describes his interest in theatre as an organic involvement:

I think there are two types of people interested in the theatre: those who approach it from the point of view of intellectual attraction and those who become absorbed in it with their whole being. Of the two, I belong rather to the latter type.

The first time Mishima gave vent to his dramatic talents was towards the end of the war. According to a postcard later published by his professor Shimizu Fumio, in May 1945 Mishima was living in a navy arsenal at Kanagawa prefecture as a member of the students' labour camp. On his desk he had a number of classical books, such as The Diary of Izumi Shikibu 和泉式部日記, Collected Works of Ueda Akinari 上田秋成, Kojiki 古事記, A Collection of No Plays, Zeami's Kagami-Hana 鏡花 , etc. He was apparently translating into No verse a one-act play by Yeats (probably At the Hawk's Well),
Thus Mishima faced the end of the war with an extraordinary act of escapist defiance. It was a manifestation of his tendency to make the harsh facts of reality abstract, withdraw into an individualistic Ivory Tower and indulge in his classicist aesthetics. On the other hand, it was an outlet for his adolescent love of No plays. He later admitted to having been partly inspired by Yeats's 'adaptations' of the No in writing his own version of modern No plays.

Although Mishima claims, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, that his dramatic talent was granted to him by the Gods and that writing plays rather than novels is to him like a 'heart-felt song', he wrote his first play Kataku (The Burning House) in 1948, only after winning recognition as a prose writer.

Kataku is a one-act family drama. In it Mishima already shows both his dramatic skill and his inherent weakness for creating unnatural characters and composing a contrived climax. As the Buddhist connotation of the title indicates, the play is concerned with the 'burning house' of human passions in this suffering world.

Mishima begins and ends the play with rather obvious, expressionist symbols. The setting is a disorderly living-room of the Ōsato household looking onto a large uncultivated garden and a neglected farm in the background. This is a reflection of the chaotic state of emotional involvements in the family, which forms the core of the dramatic situation in the play. The final symbol is the actual fire breaking out at the point of emotional climax reached at the end of the wife's confession of her adultery with a boarder.

Only three characters appear on stage: Mr. Ōsato Teijirō, a middle class intellectual with a meagre income from his translations and from letting rooms, his wife, Chiyoko, and
and daughter, Chikako 杉子. The plot develops through their dialogue skilfully introducing the boarder, Mr. Moriya 宇屋, the son, Teiichi 帝一, and the maid, Matsu 松. It turns out that the seventeen-year-old son has an affair with the maid, while the nineteen-year-old daughter is in love with the boarder. Mr. Moriya's singing tenor is heard from another room and the daughter leaves saying to her parents that she is going to see an opera with him. Before her departure, a telephone call for an old woman also boarding in the house reveals that a girl in the neighbourhood has committed suicide. This is Mishima's ominous hint at the developing tragic climax. He also suggests a mounting emotional tension between the mother and the daughter.

When Chiyoko remains alone with her husband, she breaks into a hysterical act of confession, realising that Chikako and Moriya have gone to commit a double suicide. She discloses to her husband that one night, hearing a noise in the maid's room, she went to her son's room, and, finding his bed empty, decided to make sure whether Moriya was in his room. Once confronted with the boarder, she could not resist her attraction to the young man and, Shigeko admits that she was the one who actually seduced him. She pleads with her husband to strike her, but he refuses to believe the story. As he retires to his study, fire is seen in the garden, and the play ends with the flames licking the eaves of the balcony.

This play is a clear beginning of Mishima's tendency to place characters in unusual situations and make them act in ways one cannot normally conceive. He generally sacrifices the natural, living quality of personalities for his abstract conception of dramatic development. But Mishima's first play does not fail to impress with its masterful dialogue and a skilful use of dramatic surprise.
To be dramatic is Mishima's professed methodology and his main aesthetic principle. Since childhood Mishima has apparently nursed the idea that life is a stage. This attitude underlies his aesthetic view of the novel and his basic technique of playwrighting. He isolates his characters from life and the outside world, subjecting them to the rigid framework of his carefully thought out dramatic structure. Expressing strong criticism of the recent novels in Japan, which have a smooth, round form without a clear indication of the introduction, development and climax, Mishima postulates that the prime emphasis in the novel should be on dramatic structure:

I myself am keen on dramatic structure. Therefore, it is a common feature of almost all my novels that complications begin from the opening scene and the structure leads up to the climax...In my early youth I learnt from Radiguet's Le Bal du Compte d'Orgel how to intensify the extreme degree of climax; ever since, I have stubbornly kept the habit of not being satisfied with a flat development. Radiguet's build up of climax is highly architectural; but I set my mind from the beginning of the composition and continuously calculate on climax alone.

This approach can be illustrated in the works regarded as Mishima's masterpieces. Their common feature is that the writer pursues the process by which the hero's sentiments develop along a set course on a stage completely isolated from the outside world. Almost invariably, their sentiments take the form of violent actions leading up to a catastrophe. In The Thirst of Love, the heroine is possessed with a compulsion to murder the male servant Saburo, a handsome youth with whom she has fallen desperately in love. In The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, the rising inner tension of the stuttering acolyte, in whom the beauty of the Golden Pavilion evokes feelings of impotence hindering his links with life, develops to the climactic conclusion that he must burn down the Golden Pavilion in order to extricate
himself from its controlling reins. In Mishima's famous dramatic story *Shishi* (*The Lioness*), the heroine Shigeko, a jealous young wife, cannot stop herself even from strangling her own son in order to deal a crushing blow to her unfaithful husband.

Mishima's dramatic conception is clearly outlined in each case. The structure is built up ingeniously from the introductory hints in the beginning through a variety of fictional events—all leading up to the culminating climax in the final scene of catastrophe. The writer follows his plan to the minutest detail, developing the story to a pitch of tension and a breathtaking climactic close. The only problem is that a sensitive reader may at times feel overwhelmed by the writer's over-bearing technique.

However, this characteristic of Mishima's style of writing is partly the result of his assiduous training in Western methodology. He is adopting the method of the substitution of a spatial for temporal form. This is a common technique of Western writers of dramatic novels. The most skilful of them, like Proust, Joyce and Woolf, have been successful in creating a unified apprehension of reality through extra-temporal perspectives.

The *Lioness* is a short story embodying Mishima's concept of the dramatic. It was written in 1948, soon after the publication of his first play *Katakuro* and has gained a critical appraisal as one of Mishima's most successful stories. This assessment is particularly significant if one bears in mind that Mishima had by that time won the recognition as a writer of short stories and that *The Lioness* was his first attempt at writing a dramatic story.

The framework of the story is taken from Euripides' *Medea*, the classical tragedy portraying violent human emotions in a bloody revenge of jealousy. *Medea*, the Princess of Colchis, takes revenge on her husband by sending a viper as a mortal gift to his second bride, the Princess of Corinth and even slaying her
Mishima's Medea, Shigeko, is the young wife of a successful, irresponsible businessman Hisao Kawasaki, who is lacking in any ideology or philosophy of life. She had been swept off her feet by this playboy when he was employed at her father's company in Mukden during the war. From the first year of their married life, Hisao has suffered from Shigeko's jealousy, which felt 'like the claws of a lioness'. Now, back in Japan, he has become infatuated with Tsuneko, a twenty-four-year-old daughter of his new employer Kikuchi Keisuke, But his wife, the incarnation of revenge, clearly demonstrates that jealousy has a power of clairvoyance. She has penetrating eyes that see through her husband with fierce, lightning flashes. In a tense scene when she questions Hisao point blank about his affair with Tsuneko, she appears to her husband like a lioness in the cage, her long hair glistening in the sun like a mane. Her changing moods of 'tragic love full of contradictions' are skilfully woven as the underlying thread of the story. Her dark passion of jealousy is depicted rising to an irresistible compulsion of revenge. When she extracts her husband's admission that he had stayed together with Tsuneko in a country inn, something almost audibly 'collapses in her eyes' and her mind is made up:

Thank you. These words have restored my strength to live. The strength to live from now on without giving in to anything.

From that point, her sole purpose and the driving force of Shigeko's life is a desire to make her husband suffer. She designs a scheme to poison Hisao's mistress and the girl's father. Declining the invitation to the party, at which the subject of Hisao and Tsuneko's marriage was to be broached, she sends a bottle of poisoned wine as a token of her 'apology' for failing to come personally. Her heart delights in visualising Hisao's shock at
the sight of his mistress dying. But the last triumph of her revenge is to see her husband's agony when he discovers their only boy strangled by Shigeko's hands.

Mishima crowns the story with an obvious melodrama. Once again, his technique is carried to the extreme, and as a result, the life quality of his work is lost. The scene of the boy's death is described in detail, till it becomes almost repulsive. Shigeko even asks her son to die for her:

Die for me, won't you. Mother will die immediately after you. Only, Mother must not die at all costs without seeing your father in agony when he looks at your dead face. When that is over, I shall follow you without fail. Now, you can relax. Was there ever a time when Mother failed to keep her promise?

With these words she suffocates the frantic boy. Hisao returns from the party crying with impotent anger:

A devil! - You are not a woman but a lioness with a human face... You are the very source of evil on this earth. I hate you.

But Shigeko remains triumphant:

In pitch darkness Shigeko stood leaning against the wall of the corridor. Her heart throbbed with joy. This was the moment she had lived for.

After seeing his dead son, Hisao staggers out of the room looking like an old man and falls prostrate on the floor. His hands reach out for Shigeko's feet and he begs her to kill him. But she replies that her objective stops at making him suffer. When he asks if she did not realise that she was the only person he truly loved, Shigeko ends the story with the words:

Indeed, I knew it. I have never doubted it for a moment.
Here, Mishima shows his normal technique of adding a different light to the nature of his model. But one cannot help feeling that he is blemishing the classical perfection by an unnecessary feat of originality.

Kenkichi Yamamoto discusses The Lioness as an extreme example of Mishima's dramatic approach to novel-writing. According to him, Mishima's novels are stifled with the excess of dramatic elements. In the case of The Lioness, the artificial cultivation of the dramatic is implied by the very conception of the story as an adaptation of the play, since the author shows his modus operandi by saying he traced the pattern of Medea. However, Yamamoto Kenkichi points out that almost all Mishima's novels leave the impression of having derived hints from Greek tragedy, Racine's tragedy, the No drama, etc. The dramatic is overwhelming in them, which, in Yamamoto's opinion, substantiates the belief that Mishima is a born dramatic poet.

Mishima's quality as a dramatic poet therefore comes out in his prose works as well as in his plays. The skilfulness of his dialogue is an outstanding feature of his novels and the lines of his plays are full of extraordinary vitality. Some of the best of Mishima's plays are said to leave the impression on the reader as if he were hearing actual human voices. On the other hand, there were times when Mishima deliberately wrote unnatural, poetic dialogue in order to create a particular abstract effect. This is noticeable especially in the Collection of Modern No Plays, which represent the acme of Mishima's conception of poetic drama. It is also carried to an extreme in The Tropical Tree, a play Mishima wrote in 1960 using expressionist techniques. But in almost all Mishima's plays, though their lines may have the convincing ring of human voices, the characters are used, often too obviously, just as mouthpieces for Mishima's own ideas.
For example, in *Wakōdo yo, Komigaere* (Re-Awaken, Oh Youth!) written in 1954, Mishima uses a great number of characters, some of whom leave a strong impression that their function is merely to express certain ideas. This is a three-act play set in a navy arsenal turned into a students' hall - a setting obviously taken from Mishima's war-time experience. The first act takes place on the seventh of August, the day after the Hiroshima bombing, the second act on the fifteenth of August, the day of Japan's surrender, and the third act on the sixteenth of August, the beginning of the 'postwar' era. In the first act, the students, incited by the news of the atomic bombing, begin to talk about death and destruction. Asked whether he wants to die, one of the students says:

Suzuki: 鈴木
(frankly) That's right. I like utter luxury and extravagance....

In time of peace, people never think of being extravagant... But in Japan today, people use up things they want like hot water and spend lavishly buying extravagant goods to their heart's content. That is death, you see. When I think of myself dying, I get drunk with the privilege of youth;

Kuramochi: 倉持
But if an atomic bomb drops, won't everyone die, old men and middle-aged men?

Suzuki:
But only a young man's death is extravagant and wasteful, you see. For he uses up the rest of his life all at once. Only a young lad's death is beautiful. (becoming intoxicated with his own words). It is like a kind of art. Because, while being opposed to nature, it is nevertheless a certain condition of nature.

Mishima's preoccupation with reflections on death and beauty echoes in this dialogue. Although he has chosen an appropriate setting for the conversation about extravagant death and the beauty of dying young, the students are unmistakably directly voicing
Mishima's pet notions.

In the same play, a young soldier Hiro- lashes out at the intellectuals calling them gutless. He argues passionately that if they had any guts, they could not just look on silently at their country being brought down on its knees before the barbarians. For the soldiers, on the contrary, to die for their country is a reason to live:

For us, to die was a reason for being alive. Our mates were dying one after another. Not a single fellow died a coward. They were cheerful and happy in the face of death. I was jealous of the fellows who died. But my reason for living was the hope that some day I should be able to die following after my war mates.....

How about it? The homeland that all of you love is being trampled on by the enemy's dirty boots! The honour of your sisters is destroyed by the foreigners! The ups and downs of your life from now on will be controlled by their blue eyes! Why, even the peace and safety of the Imperial house is uncertain! All young men may be castrated! And our fame and pride as Japanese is falling into dust. And yet, are you all on your feet or have you resigned yourselves to be treated like niggers? Which do you choose, honourable death or a life of mediocrity? Youth does not come twice! Don't you understand that now you are on the crossroads of choosing a most beautiful death or living a servile life?

The soldier later commits suicide at the very spot where he made this ecstatic speech. He admits that the army has failed and entrusts the future of the country to the young intellectuals. It is a matter for conjecture how far Mishima's voice carries through the outspoken words of the soldier. But one should not forget that Mishima had embraced the nationalistic ideals of the Japanese Romantic school and that Hayashi Fusao's nationalistic heroism was Mishima's one time model. Besides, the feelings of tension at the sight of destruction during the war, Mishima's yearning for masculine things, his thoughts on death, stoic pride, beauty and heroism of
An interesting aspect of this play is that Mishima uses in it the No technique of free mixing of the dream world and reality. He introduces flash-backs and projections into the future. Almost every student has a dream, which is enacted on stage with the use of spot-light technique. One of the students' dreams portrays Mishima's unusual version of happiness:

Suzuki: ... happiness is so unique that there is no need to confirm it point by point. It is like an excellent machine. Some people buy a machine of unhappiness. The machine has already started working. The machine is something more precise than human beings. It is solid. Unconcerned with our worries, hopes, yearnings and memories, the machine of happiness is smoothly engaging its cogwheels, and, just like a construction machine, it goes on working expressionlessly. If by some one-in-a-million-chance a belt were to snap ....

Fusako: If it snapped?
Suzuki: You just have to join it up.
Fusako: If it did not join?
Suzuki: Then you just replace it with a new belt. Spare parts are sold everywhere. The only thing is that there are only a few people like us who have the machine.

Mishima's characters often talk in abstract or symbolic terms. The hero of another three-act play, Tōka no Kiku (Chrisanthemum After Ten Days), is a former Minister of Finance. Saved from his assassins by a faithful servant Kiku, who had become his mistress, for sixteen years he has longed for a return of the strong tension of the time when the armed rebels had raided his home. Ever since, his only passion has been for cacti. He is a man who knows that dreams are dead, but continues to cherish the secret hope of an ultimate revelation. Through him, Mishima again gives expression to his symbolic thoughts:
Mori: Politics is a cactus, and the Cabinet is a cactus too. But even though they are cacti, it is still necessary to water them. They need the affection of the people who cultivate them. Unless they are given it they will decay. They will then decay even though they need not have decayed.

In some plays, Mishima's characters have almost an unreal quality. They give the impression of set types enacting a puppet play with a fixed, pre-determined plot. For example, the second one-act play Mishima wrote, (and the last before he began writing Modern No plays), is called Seiyo (A Saintly Woman). It is a tragi-comic melodrama taking place one autumn evening from 11 pm. till midnight. Young lovers Yuichi and Natsuko represent the lost, postwar generation given to hedonism and sloth. They live off Yuichi's elder sister Fumiko, who personifies a saintlike goodness and generosity. Fumiko sacrifices everything for them, selling even her body to support them. She gives her last kimono to the hopelessly spoilt Natsuko. A simple, self-effacing woman, she lives by her father's words: "if anyone wants something from you, give it with gladness in your heart."

Yuichi, who has squandered the money from the sale of their father's house, abuses his sister to the last limit. Suddenly, he wakes up to the facts of reality, and, realising that Fumiko's generous heart is the source of his weaknesses, decides to strangle her. Natsuko fails to prevent him from doing so and accuses him
of killing his sister because he loved her. She asks him to take arsenic and commit a double suicide with her, but Yuichi refuses and lets her die alone. The play ends with the clock striking midnight, after Yuichi has thrown his father's portrait out of the window and announced in self-pity that the greatest suffering in life is to have to witness a tragedy.

All three characters are unconvincing, and the plot is clearly contrived. The dramatic element hinges entirely on the shock of the scene of murder and the abortive double suicide. However, one is struck by Mishima's love of paradox and the unusual turn of situation. This is a characteristic of most of Mishima's later plays and it is interesting to see him display it already in his second play. His message seems to be that goodness and generosity, like all qualities, have two sides. While they are a source of comfort to people, they can also be a source of weakness. Therefore, to extricate himself from self-indulgence, Yuichi kills both his sister, who has been devoted to him like a slave, and Natsuko, with whom he was blindly in love.

Another paradoxical character is the heroine of *Bara to Kaizoku* (The Rose and the Pirate). She is a writer of fairy tales who lives completely immersed in the world of her own imaginary stories. Although married, she never sleeps with her husband. She dresses up her daughter, conceived on the one and only occasion she shared her husband's bed, as a princess from fairy tales, and in the courtyard she makes willow forests, pirate boats and richly coloured windmills. The daughter becomes exasperated with her mother's childishness and elopes with a stranger saying that she believes only in sexual love. But paradoxically, Mishima conveys that the daughter is actually childish, while the mother is portrayed as a shrewd, conscious creator of her own dreamworld. At the end of the play, the heroine, Kaede Ariko, carries on the following conversation with
the young imbecile Teiichi, who fancies himself to be the hero of her fairy tales:

Teiichi : I hope we are not dreaming.

Kaede : It's all right. You leave it to me. Even if what you see may be a dream.

Teiichi: All right.

Kaede: (forcefully): I have certainly never engaged in anything like dreaming.

In other words, Kaede admits that hers are artificial dreams consciously woven by herself. Earlier in the play, the unreal quality of these characters becomes more apparent when they voice Mishima's paradoxical metaphors. Teiichi and Kaede discuss the world in the following terms.

Teiichi: I don't particularly mind if the world turns topsy turvy.

Kaede: It is not something one should not care about, Teiichi. The world is like soup in a plate, easy to spill. Everyone must handle the rim of the soup plate so as not to spill it.

Teiichi: Oh, but it would be fun if everyone spilt the soup. Then ladybugs, moss flowers, daisies, centipedes laboriously crawling, tobacco ashes - would all come to drink the soup with relish.

This quality of unreality, adorned with paradoxical metaphors, elaborate aphorisms and outlandish symbols, appears throughout Mishima's writing. Discussing the symbolism of Mishima's plays in a book entitled Bungaku to Shi-seishin (Literature and Poetic Spirit), Muramatsu Takeshi classifies most of Mishima's plays as skilful psychological 'salon dramas'. He points out that their special nature lies in the very character of Mishima's ideas rather than in the design by which their psychological patterns are woven. It is generally recognised that Mishima tends to make clear-cut judgements about the subjects of
his works. In novels too, rather than adopting a realistic sketching technique, Mishima chooses an explanatory and critical style. Thus, by writing cluttered with countless paradoxes and aphorisms, he creates his small universe and makes up a unique, artificial 'flower garden'.

As Muramatsu Takeshi notes, the heroes of Mishima's plays cultivate plants with flowers of primary, strong colours. In Bara to Kaizoku (The Rose and the Pirate), the heroine lives surrounded with a strange garden and the symbol of the rose pervades the play. In Shiro-ari no Su (The White Ants' Nest), the young heroine dreams of an exotic plant called 'alamander', a yellow flower growing in South America. In Nettaijū (The Tropical Tree), the central symbol is an imaginary tropical tree. In Tōka-no Kiku (Chrysanthemum After Ten Days), the hero is a passionate lover of cacti.

Muramatsu Takeshi ascribes this infatuation with flowers of exotic lands and striking colour to Mishima's inherent romanticism. He explains Mishima's symbolical use of the 'flower of passion' conceived as the flower which is not to be found in nature:

As for the rose, the flower of love, what is it? Isn't love an artificial flower? Art too, is an artificial flower, and aren't all the passions, in fact, man-made, artificial flowers that have bloomed upon 'unreality'? This is, so to speak, the way of thinking at the basis of Mishima Yukio's 'landscape gardening', and it also becomes a theme running through all his works.

To substantiate Mishima's conception, Muramatsu Takeshi quotes the writer's own words from the notes on The Rose and the Pirate:

The world is unreal. - This is one viewpoint. But one can put it another way and say that 'the world is a rose'. However, it is very difficult to get
across what one means by expressing it this way. There is a flower called 'rose' that one can see, and, although it grows in any garden before everyone's eyes, if one were to say 'the world is a rose', people would consider him insane; but if he were to say 'the world is unreal', he would be readily listened to and would even be respected as a philosopher. Now this is completely irrational. A flower called 'unreality' does not bloom anywhere at all.

When Mishima appeared on the stage in the immediate postwar age, a keen sense of the words 'the world is unreal' was widespread. Muramatsu Takeshi considers that it was unique and original of Mishima to assume in such a situation an anti-age pose and maintain that 'the world is a flower':

Instead of talking about unreality, Mishima placed artificial flowers upon that unreality. He placed 'alamanders', a tropical tree trickling with blood, a rose and a cactus plant. Since there is no sense in artificial flowers displaying the colours and exuding the scents only as artificial flowers, the writer set about creating all kinds of elaborate devices to endow the flowers, which were made to bloom in that unreality, with a true lustre after all.

In this way, Mishima adopts the modern approach of subjecting life to the technique of deformation. According to Murayama Tomoyoshi, this phenomenon is due to the fact that there exists in Mishima's literature, as in fact in the writing of most modern writers, an inherent sense of despair as a presupposition that the modern age is too complicated and cannot be rationally grasped in a form that would give it unity.

In contrast to Mishima's non-realistic characters and symbolic representation of themes, his use of language is often remarkably realistic. His plays are noted for their masterful dialogue, which ranges from the colloquial jargon to purely abstract, poetic exchange. The competence of Mishima's dialogue is one of the
main reasons for the production effect of his plays, which makes them attractive to the Shingeki 新劇 theatrical groups.

Mishima disclaims any training in modern drama techniques. However, in My Wandering Age he says that he takes a great deal of time and trouble to record actual conversations and make faithful sketches of situations. For this reason, he himself believes that the descriptive passages in his novels and conversational scenes in plays are his forte.

One of the plays often quoted for the life-like quality of Mishima's dialogue is Re-Awaken, Oh Youth! Exceptionally for Mishima's plays, this one has many autobiographical elements. Among the dream scenes of students re-capturing their memories or visualising their hopes for the future while they are facing the end of the war, the most vivid is the dream of Hayashi, who evokes on stage the scenes from Mishima's childhood. The boy Hayashi was not fond of his parents. While they pampered him and fussed over him excessively, the speechless child remained unhappy, sensing discord between the parents. On summer evenings, they often took him to the riverside to let him watch the fireworks. He would sit silently, apprehensive of their alternate fussing and bickering:

Mother: What kind of a pattern will it be this time, baby?
Father: Yes, this one will be even prettier than the last!
Mother: The last one was like a waterfall rising.
Father: This one is going to be like cherry blossoms scattering, for sure.
Mother: Baby, you mustn't eat kindamako all the time. You'll upset your stomach.
Father: Look, son, there comes a boat with a full array of lanterns under its eaves. The people on the boat are all looking at you and talking. 'A sweet child! What a charming boy,' they are all saying. Are you happy son?
Mother: Baby, have some rolled omelet now. That will do your tummy good. Take it in one piece.

Father: The fireworks are about to go up, son. This time they will surely be like the scattering cherry blossoms.

Mother: The last one was like a rising waterfall, wasn't it baby?

Hayashi: (his voice is heard talking to Ōmura 村 in Room B. below.) 'Both the father and the mother seem to be very fond of their child,' the people on the boat must have thought. What a happy family. What a fortunate child... But child though I was, I could see through it and I was gloomily smiling. The parents were talking to me and fussing over me just because they did not want to talk to each other. Just watch, and you will clearly see the proof.

Father: Look at the stand to the right, son. See the multitude of fans moving. Beautiful girls laughing and chattering, swaying their white, gentle necks. How about it, son, aren't they like dolls?

Mother: Oh, how smoky it is! Smoke gets into your eyes when you look at the surface of the river. Look this way, baby. That way is against the wind... Look, look at the stand to the left. You can see beautiful girls. The fireworks are beautiful, but the girls are pretty too. Why, they are much prettier than mother... Look, you see that girl with a coral hairpin. You see the girl with a determined look and thin lips. That is your father's sweetheart. But she is not the only sweetheart of your father. This place is alive with terrible girls who have made your mother cry and caused her painful memories... Look, baby, that one facing the other girl...

Father: Look at the stand on the right, son. A funny man is making everyone laugh. He is the story-teller called to that stand.

Mother: Haven't I told you to look at the stand on
the left, baby. You see that girl sitting opposite the other girl and looking very much like the first one. That was also your father's sweetheart. Your father likes that kind of face. While a face like mine, your father dislikes by instinct.

**Father:** (cannot contain himself) Stop bothering the child with such nonsense.

**Mother:** (pretending not to hear) How disgusting. That girl smiled at your father. Can't she see that I am here? Of course, these days they employ Geishas who don't understand even that much.

**Father:** You look hungry again, son. Have another rolled omelet.

**Mother:** You can't have any more rolled omelets, baby.

**Father:** Have another one, son.

**Mother:** You mustn't have any more, baby.

**Father:** Why don't you take it. If father says you may have another one, it's all right... Why don't you have one... I see, well, do as you please. You've had enough, I suppose. Father will put the box away. (he tidies up the picnic box lying before the child).

**Mother:** (triumphantly) You are a good boy, doing as mother tells you, baby.

(with a deafening roar the fireworks' terrific light throws a purple reflection on the stage stands. Father, mother and child remain silent).

**Father:** I suppose the fireworks will be over soon.

**Mother:** (looking at the programme) There is still a lot to go, so let's enjoy it slowly tonight, baby. Plenty of pretty fireworks yet!

(with a coaxing voice) You are not sleepy, are you?

**Father:** I will be back in a minute, sonny. (rises)

**Mother:** Where are you going?

**Father:** I am coming back right away, son.

**Mother:** Stop him, baby. (the child does as he is told. the father sits down again.) You thought you'd leave the child and get away somewhere. Well, that won't do. Tonight,
we have come to watch fireworks for the boy's sake, so you'd better behave and sit beside the boy.

Father: Son, you look sleepy.

Mother: You are not sleepy at all, are you baby.

Father: What do you say, son, this river looks so deep, and, every year when there are fireworks, a drowned person comes up. There is a river before the unhappy eyes, and, why, what if your mother should jump into the river now?

Mother: (crying) Yes, I will jump in too. Some day, mother will jump into the river and die, for sure. Then you will feel sorry for your mother. You will come and leave incense on your mother's grave sometimes; your dead mother, who had no happy memories in her life, so she threw herself into the river, won't you, baby? But I won't jump in now. I can't do such a thing in front of my baby, can I? Father is saying such cruel things, but I can't go that far.

Father: It's all right. If your mother were to jump in, she would ball and squall so much that someone would soon save her. For she is not a mother likely to drown quietly, is she.

Mother: If that's what you think, shall I jump in and show you? I will jump in and show you right now. (rises).

Father: Son, mother says she is going to jump in. Well, it is my duty to remain an impassive spectator, but you, you may stop her if you like.

(the child pulls her back mechanically. The mother embraces the child with exaggerated gestures and cries).

Mother: (crying): Of course, mother can't die leaving you behind.

Father: (yawning): I thought that was coming.

Mother: Some day, I am going to die too! I'll make sure to die. Then, baby, you will watch for me your father's sorry face.
The versatility of Mishima’s pen may be judged from the variety and flexible adaptability of his dialogue. The characters of Mishima’s plays range from members of the French aristocracy to Japanese immigrants in Brazil, from political figures of the Rokumeikan time to poetic personifications of abstract ideas. Nevertheless, Mishima succeeds in creating a true ring in their speech and conveying the right nuance of a particular local colour. A good example of this is the play which won the Kishida Drama Award Shiroari no Su (The White Ants’ Nest).

The setting of the play is the residence of a coffee plantation owner Kariya Jirō, situated an hour by air from San Paolo in Brazil. Mr. and Mrs. Kariya have migrated from Japan and represent an old blase generation. Their chauffeur Momoshima and his wife were born in Brazil and personify vigorous youth. Ōsugi, the manager of the plantation, is the only upright character in the play. Self-sacrificing, devoted to work, rising above worldly passions and weaknesses, he is the symbol of traditional loyalty and self-abnegation. Although he longs for Japan and always dreams about returning, when he is urged to take advantage of Mr. Kariya’s generous offer to pay for his trip back, he begs the master to let him stay so that he may preserve his unfulfilled dream of dying in Japan.

Momoshima’s wife, Keiko, is aware that her husband and Kariya’s wife had tried to commit a double suicide. She senses a renewed intimacy between them and perversely tries to accelerate it. She confides in Kariya and urges him to go away. Kariya takes a trip to San Paolo and gets into newspaper headlines over an affair with a well-known entertainment artist. Upon receiving Keiko’s telegram he returns home to find that his wife and Momoshima have become intimate again. He then confesses his love for Keiko and takes her to the same barn where his wife and Momoshima had tried to commit suicide.
Momoshima comes back in time to see his wife walking off with his boss towards the barn. Although both Momoshima and Mrs. Kariya witness what is happening, neither is prepared to take any action.

Momoshima and Mrs. Kariya decide again to commit suicide and leave a note to that effect. When Momoshima's wife finds the note, she calls Kariya, who then tells her of his tormented life with his wife always prone to flirt with other men. Ecstatically, Kariya begs Keiko to become his wife:

Kariya: ... Keiko, you are the sun! The sun of Brazil! You may kick me, step on me. At last I have seen what I have wanted to see all my life... You are the solid earth! The vast, burning solid earth of Brazil. The angry sun, your blood, your fierce heart that fears nothing... Ah, your blood which pounds vigorously and nourishes a palm-tree reaching up to the sky, your new surging blood... That's it, that's it, that's what I wanted.

Lines of this nature are hardly distinguishable from a dialogue in a Western play. In most of his drama Mishima in fact adopts Western techniques. He uses clear, strong lines, charged with emotion or pregnant with symbolism. His characters often express their emotions too openly. To many Japanese critics, this is repugnant. They call Mishima's plays 'outlandish'. This criticism is justified in many cases, but one cannot deny the popularity of Mishima's plays with modern drama audiences. Perhaps the new generation of Japanese theatre-goers, accustomed mainly to productions of translated Western plays, is developing a radically changed appreciation of dramatic art.

In this play also, Mishima employs his usual, paradoxical dramatic surprise. Momoshima and Mrs. Kariya do not commit suicide after all. Like the white ants who suddenly return to their abandoned, empty mounds, they return from the dead to shatter Kariya and Keiko's hopes of marriage. Keiko desperately
urges Kariya not to forgive his wife this time, but he is too weak to make such a step. So Keiko’s dreams are crushed and she cries out squatting in the middle of the stage:

I am frightened. The dead have lifted their grave stones and come back. The white ants have returned.137.

Mishima’s stage setting again shows a great variety of style. In plays like Rokumeikan 広場馆 he uses elaborate, realistic settings. In psychological dramas he often employs simplified stage design to create impressionistic effects. In many plays his technique is expressionistic in so far as he expresses his thoughts by means of projection through a set of external objects (windmills, sails, dead birds, flowers, etc.) and symbols like the exotic plants (cactus, alamander, etc.) or the imaginary tropical tree.

This technique is developed most conspicuously in the Tropical Tree, Mishima’s personal favourite. The writer consciously conforms in this play to the Aristotelian unities, while attempting to create an abstract version of the ’double suicide’ plays of Chikamatsu. Here again, Mishima strives to create something of a hybrid, a blend of the Greek and Japanese classicism adorned with a modern technique. In a note about the play he says:

Tropical Tree .... represents my vision of classicism in the theatre at its most intense, and as such is the most abstract play I have written. 138.

The story of the drama was told to Mishima by a girl student of French Literature living in Paris. Mishima recorded in his notes that he had been impressed by the story as a ’manifestation of the Jungian collective unconscious’. His recollections of the process by which the story was utilised and transformed into an original play throw important light on Mishima’s methodology. They show Mishima’s technique of grafting his own ideas onto borrowed themes or incidents:
I raked my brain for some way of transferring this uncomplicated 'Greek myth for money' to a Japanese setting so as to achieve my hoped-for quintessence of classicism.

A scene on the reclaimed lands of Shibaura; the inducement to death of Chikamatsu's love-suicide plays; memories of my dead sister; the flowers of a 'flame-tree' seen in the Dominican Republic; a nurse in our family when I was a child; 

I concentrated on gathering the images that floated up dream-like from my memory, co-ordinating and imposing on them my dramatic theories.

Mishima further explains the conception of his play:

As my 'Japanese Electra' thus took shape, the dialogue drew ever closer to poetry. My concern was that the stage should be peopled by passions only, by passions clothed in words. All must be bathed in nightmarish hues, yet the essential drama remain clear as crystal.

The drama takes place in the house of a wealthy bourgeois. Keisaburo is an unhappy tyrant, whose only wish is that people should smile when he comes into the room and look as if they felt pleased. He receives no affection as he himself is unable to return love. He believes that:

Heart keeps people apart - even parents and children.

In their relations with one another people should choose to smile rather than rely on things like the heart.

As an echo of his thoughts, a song is heard in the background:

A man is alone
A woman is alone
Alone in laughter
Alone in tears.

Man dies and is gone
Only laughter is left.
This is Nobuko 個子, the aunt, singing. She is a sort of common-sense, Japanese Cassandra, who tries unsuccessfully to pacify and stabilise the family torn with emotional tensions.

The children both hate and love Keisaburō. The daughter, Ikuko 伊工子, torn between love of her brother and love of her father, plots that the brother kill the mother. The son, Isamu 伊東, caught in the emotional scissors between sister and mother - both attempting to seduce him - finds himself unable to make the choice. Eventually, he falls prey to his sister's destructive passion. He cannot kill his mother and lacks courage to murder his father. In a scene of clash between father and son, Isamu exclaims:

It does not matter how long you live, you'll never become a father. You'll always be just a male animal. There's never been any family in this house, only a man and a woman, forever dangling after each other. And you are the root of this!

The mother, Ritsuko 周子, is a person of complex character, perverse nature, full of evil scheming. When her son comes to murder her, she savours the pleasure, exposes her breasts and invites him to spend the night. She is a deadly enemy to her daughter. Besides, she urges her son to murder her husband.

At the end of the play, after the children have taken off to the sea on a bicycle to commit a double suicide, the mother's dialogue is tantamount to a declaration of murder. She tells her husband about her decision to plant a tropical tree, a dream tree of the children's imagination. The scarlet flower of the tropical tree is the symbol of evil - a metaphor that permeates the whole play.

Mishima's explanation of the method he adopted in writing Tropical Tree brings into focus the basic approach of the writer to literary creation. One of the main points in Mishima's liter-
nature is that the majority of his works are modelled either after an outlandish original piece or after incidents which he calls 'classical'. He treats incidents with a 'classical character' in the same way as he approaches classical themes. In other words, both serve Mishima as ideal vehicles through which he expresses his ideas and gives shape to his theories. By powerful imagination and highly competent technique, he moulds classical themes, or incidents with a 'classical character', into methodically contrived works of art.

A survey of Mishima's enormous output reveals a high proportion of works written with some model, a particular writer, style or technique in mind. His early stories are based on the classics of Japanese literature. Minomo-no Tsuki, for example, is virtually a reproduction of a Heian Diary. Yoyo ni Nokosan is based on Heike and Taiheiki. Hanazakari no Mori is a blend of the Japanese classics and the style of Heike. In the immediate postwar period Mishima turned to modern Western writers like Raymond Radiguet, Jean Genet, François Mauriac, Julian Sorel, André Gide, James Joyce, etc. Confessions of a Mask is a combination of a number of Western models: Thief's Diary, by Jean Genet, Le Bal du Comte d'Orgel, by Raymond Radiguet, The Picture of Dorian Grey, by Oscar Wilde, etc. The Thirst of Love combines Mauriac with hints from Greek tragedy. Niobe is a grotesque use of Greek mythology. The same may be said for Mishima's version of Medea in The Lioness. (These works, full of exaggerations, hyperboles and bombast, are quite remote from the moderation and clarity of the Greek classics.) The Sound of Waves is a skilful novel based on the story of Daphnis and Chloe. Shigadera Shōnin no Koi (The Priest and his Love) is based on the legend of Shigadera Shōnin. Fuyōro is a Kabuki adaptation of Racine's Phedre. - The list could go on ad infinitum. But the most important example of his borrowing is generally considered to be
Mishima's adaptation of the Nō plays.

It is hardly necessary to point out that Mishima is not exceptional in looking to the classics or other sources for his themes. The art of borrowing is one of the basic literary devices practised both in the East and in the West since ancient times. Some of the greatest gems of Chinese and Japanese literature are based on allusions to earlier masterpieces. In fact, reference to the works of great masters used to be considered an indispensable mark of literary accomplishment in China since Confucius and Japan since the Manyōshū days. Japanese theatre is particularly renowned for its tradition of borrowing. The Nō plays, for example, are often called 'patchworks of literary brocade', because they were composed by reference to a variety of sources. Kabuki plays are heavily dependent on the Nō plays and Chikamatsu's puppet plays for plots and stylistic refinements. Direct borrowing and adaptation may be traced in Japanese drama right down to Shingeki or the New Drama which represents a complete break from the traditional theatre.

In the West, one need only mention the Bible, Homer's Odyssey and Iliad and classical Greek Drama as the constant sources of inspiration for writers throughout the centuries. Shakespeare himself could hardly claim a play which is not indebted in some way to previous models. Among the twentieth century writers especially, there is a marked tendency to borrow from the classics and re-create them in a modern context. Joyce's Ulysses has become a classic of this genre. Cocteau's treatment of the Oedipus in La Machine Infernal, O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra and Brecht's Threepenny Opera may be cited as some of the better known examples.

There is a similar trend in modern Japanese literature. The most famous adaptations are Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's
works like *Rashōmon* 羅生門 and *Hana, 響*, based on *Konjaku Monogatari* 今昔物語 (Stories, Ancient and Modern), and Katō Michio's 加藤道夫 play *Nayotake, なよたけ*, based on *Taketori* 144. Monogatari 竹取物語. Many other modern Japanese writers have often turned to the classics for inspiration. For example, Hori Tatsuo's 堀辰雄 borrowing from the Heian Diaries is well known. Kawabata Yasumari 川端康成 is conspicuous for his preoccupation with the concept of *Yugen* 幽玄. Tanizaki Junichirō's 谷崎潤一郎 indebtedness to the classics is marked particularly in the latter part of his life, after he had engaged in the monumental work of translating *The Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese.

However, no one has yet succeeded in making a lasting, modern interpretation of the No plays. Many critics believe that it is impossible to extract from the No plays an image suitable for portraying the conflicts of modern times. In this sense, Mishima's *Collection of Modern No Plays* deserves a place among the most avant-garde experimentation in modern Japanese literature.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE NO AND MISHIMA'S ADAPTATIONS

- A COMPARISON -
From its start, Mishima's literature has been a series of experiments. He made his debut during the war as a writer of short stories in the style of Heian diaries. This was a striking phenomenon in the war-time literary climate, hence the critics hailed him as 'the legitimate inheritor of the aristocratic literature' of Japan. In the chaos of the immediate postwar scene, Mishima suddenly began writing novels with the avant-garde technique of modern psychoanalytical novelists, especially French writers like Proust, Gide, Jean Genet, etc. For the second time he startled the critics, who called him a 'Japanese Camus' and the spokesman for the aprés-guerre generation. After a while, he decided that writing dramatic novels and plays was his true vocation. He strove to acquire a dramatic style and devoted much attention to the skill of building up dramatic climax. This led him to experiment with the Greek classics. He sought inspiration in Greek mythology and borrowed themes from Greek tragedies. In the search for the true meaning of classicism, Mishima studied Racine's tragedies and wrote works giving shape to his newly acquired ideas. (Britannicus and a puppet play modelled after Racine's Phedra.) Then he began to examine the possibilities of achieving a synthesis of the Japanese classical tradition and the Western concept of classicism. Next, he attempted to re-create the Japanese classics in the medium of avant-garde techniques. This resulted in the Collection of Modern No Plays.

So far, it has been impossible to predict in which direction Mishima's creative demon would throw him. Consequently, the critics are always one step behind in their assessments of Mishima's course as an artist, for the pattern of perplexing the critics with his unexpected experimentating has continued throughout his career.

A similar pattern of experiment may be traced in Mishima's personal life. From the time he decided to become a professional writer and "take up exercise in order to keep fit", he has engaged
in riding, boxing, kendo; has taken part in the ceremony of carrying a Shinto o-mikoshi, acted in his own plays and taken leads in films based on his own works. Now, at the age of forty, Mishima is reported to have taken up singing.

Apparently, the Japanese public looks upon these activities with amusement or dismay. People call them 'Mishima's pranks'. However, they reveal Mishima's eccentric, restless character, which is prone to emerge in his work too.

From the literary viewpoint, the modern No plays may be taken as the most outstanding experiment Mishima has done. His own words about the origin of the Collection of Modern No Plays indicate the experimental nature of these works:

As for the origin of the Collection of Modern No Plays, formerly I was keen on reading Yeats' verse-drama influenced by the No, I was impressed by Kôri Toraiko's Kanawa, Dojoji and Kiyohime. I had liked the No since my childhood, and so, incited by these various motives, I felt like trying out something like this.

In view of Mishima's background and his immersion in the classical heritage of Japan, his affection for the No is not surprising. For the No is a synthesis of many ancient Japanese arts and a refined product of the long spiritual traditions of the Orient. In the words of Zeami, it is a composite art form of "a ten thousand accomplishments blended into one." Hence the study of the No is really the study of Japanese culture generally, of the moral ideals, religious beliefs and artistic aspirations of the Japanese people.

Theatrically speaking, the No performance is almost antithetical to the theatre of the West in its dramatic conception and style of production. In it the Aristotelian unities of time, space and action are disregarded. Literal representation is
completely rejected and the No stage never loses its identity as a stage. The aesthetic refinement of the No's symbolised stage reflects in perfect harmony the sculptural beauty of the actor's graceful movements. The actor uses the No stage in a conventionalised, stylized pattern, always restraining his movements, gestures and attitudes. The area of dramatic activity is removed from the world of actuality. Just as Zen concerns itself with transcending the bonds of time and space, the No play moves in "a shadowy realm at the edge of life and death". Western drama portrays human beings in full complexity of their activity. In a fixed framework of time, it shows the ambiguous movement of human character caught up in the turmoils of life. The No reduces life to the essence of the experience of living where actuality remains faded in the background. The protagonist is brought to the poignant intensity of self-awareness and his spirit moves freely from the phantoms of the past to the visions of the hereafter. The drama evolves in a composite harmony of the narrative, the dance and the musical accompaniment, as dramatic emphasis alternates fluidly from the narration to the performer. Therefore, the No is essentially a total, indivisible art, which cannot be viewed in terms of Western drama with its prime emphasis on the literary nature of the script. While Western plays generally move the emotions of the audience through the intellect, the No appeals to the mind directly through the senses, establishing an aesthetic and religious rapport with the spectator. The objective of the No is not to represent realistically, like Western drama, but to create the unity of poetry, art and religion and arouse in the spectator a single emotional impression.

The No was crystalized from a variety of indigenous and imported theatrical elements into a highly stylised art by Kannami Kiyotsugu (1333-1384) and his son Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443). Ever since, it has remained a lofty model for the Puppet Theatre and the Kabuki, and a source of inspiration.
for Japanese artists in general. There is a common saying among the Japanese that their theatrical artists have always suffered from the No complex - such is the influence and the high position of the No even today. Indeed, no other art in the world can claim such a long life, or such artistic excellence and prestige.

While the No has remained preserved in its authentic form till the present day, a new form of drama, Shingeki, completely antithetic to the expression of the No, Kabuki and the Puppet Theatre, has developed under Western influence. Shingeki or New Drama is synonymous with realistic theatre, for it is designed to be purely representational. Apart from the increasing number of original plays, it includes Western plays translated into Japanese or adapted to a Japanese milieu.

After almost a century of Western influence, modern Japanese drama has virtually assumed the character of Western drama. It is now concerned with social problems and the actual life of contemporary people rather than being an aesthetic escape into the presentational world of the theatre. Its characters have become individuals and are no longer merely types. The themes of modern drama show a search for meaning beneath the facts of reality and a concern for their interpretation. Opinion, message and thought content have assumed importance.

Although the New Drama is still catering only for a limited audience, it stands today on a par with the traditional forms of theatre. So while the West has been sporadically introducing techniques of the Japanese theatre, Japan has undergone the progress of absorbing the Western concept of drama and completely adopting it as one of its own theatrical forms.

On the other hand, the impact of the No has revolutionised many Western playwrights' concepts of drama. When Noël Peri (in 1911) and Ernest Fenollosa (in 1915) introduced the No to
the West with their interpretative translations, writers like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot were impressed by it as "one of the greatest arts of the world". Yeats produced his 'plays for dancers' modelled after the No. Maeterlinck wrote essays on dramaturgy inspired by the No. Brecht's idea of a form of theatre with "sudden leaps in composition" and "a montage of scenes treated each for itself" are vaguely reminiscent of the No technique. Reinhardt and Meyerhold introduced the method of conveying the dramatic idea by linear and spatial relationships of actor and setting. Jean Cocteau was an ardent admirer of the No and consciously introduced some of its techniques into his plays.

Partly due to the influence of the No and the techniques of the Japanese theatre, beginning from the French symbolist theatre, German expressionism and the post revolutionary Russian theatre Western drama increasingly liberated itself from representation. Realism was no longer the order of the day. Imaginative use of costume and make up was preferred to the literal. Time was condensed or expanded to suit the inner dramatic movement. Emotional rapport with the audience was intensified by symbolic and simplified stage setting. Rhythm, either abstract or musical, became the unifying force of the production. All efforts were made to bring the stage and auditorium into an aesthetic whole.

Thus, the avant-garde Western playwrights have derived some of their ideas directly or indirectly from the No drama. Abandoning its representational techniques, Western theatre is becoming more and more presentational and is adopting the methods of the Japanese theatre. Jean Genet, Samuel Becket and Eugene Ionesco, for instance, have developed a completely free treatment of time and space and a bold, symbolic use of the physical theatre.

Mishima's reference, quoted earlier, concerns a group of short, one-act plays called Four Plays for Dancers, including
At the Hawk's Well, The Only Jealousy of Emer, The Dreaming of the Bones and Calvary, published in 1920 and "designed as curtain raisers for an intimate theatre and an audience of friends".

Yeats's discovery of the No was preceded by his search for a new form of poetic drama, which would approach with its lyrical narrative "the condition of music". Yeats was always concerned with the lyrical beauty of the sound of the words. Hence his preoccupation with the characters from Ireland's legendary past and the poetic quality of their speech. On the other hand, symbols that leave strong impressions upon the readers and evoke deep emotions, were more important to Yeats than those which appeal to the intellect. He found such symbols in the various intangible expressions which cross the fixed features of the mask. The mask to him expressed beauty of things which have no connection with flesh and blood or things which have no earthly life.

Yeats shunned the realistic art of Europe and was attracted to the symbolic, esoteric art of the East. In the No plays he discovered his ideal, captivated by the beauty of its words, the harmony of music movement and scene:

I have found my first model - and in literature if we would not be parvenues, we must have a model - in the No stage of aristocratic Japan...
In fact, with the help of Japanese plays translated by Ernest Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound, I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic, and having no need of mob or press to pay its way - an aristocratic art.

The example of the No had relieved Yeats of the limitations of conventional plays. In the style of the No, Yeats adopted the use of a simplified stage, making his performers sit before the wall or a patterned screen and describe landscape or events. He also used musical accompaniment of a drum, gong, zither and flute, which correspond with the instruments of the No theatre.
Yeats had a deep insight into the symbolic use of the mask. According to him, the mask can express "one of those profound emotions that exist only in solitude and silence". Fascinated by the infinite possibilities of conveying deep impressions, changing moods and a range of expressions by the mask, Yeats was even tempted to write plays for certain masks. The mask was to him a symbol of supreme beauty. What he sought was not an external, momentary beauty, but a visionary, everlasting beauty. He found it in the form of a Nō mask and the mimetic dance of the Nō drama.

The Four Plays for Dancers are highly valued in Japan as pure poetic drama. Although Yeats wrote them as an experiment in symbolic lyrical drama for a select audience, the Japanese praise their modern dramatic spirit of stressing the three-dimensional conception of the stage. The popularity of Yeats's plays in Japan may be seen from a number of their translations into Japanese. At the Hawk's Well has even been converted into a Nō play proper and produced on the Nō stage on several occasions.

When Mishima got the idea of writing his modern Nō plays after reading Yeats, he was in fact following a well established pattern. The Western discovery of a particular facet of Japanese traditional culture has frequently inspired the Japanese to re-appraise and revive their classical arts. But in Mishima's case, the emphasis is different. He got his inspiration from the verse plays of Yeats, who was interested in the Nō as a Western dramatist. The important point is that Mishima picked up his inspiration from Yeats's adaptations as a Japanese novelist interested in avant-garde literature of Europe. Here is another example of Mishima's borrowing: this time from his own Japanese traditional drama, but approached through an interest in avant-garde literature influenced by the same Japanese traditional drama. So Mishima's reasons for writing modern Nō plays are characteristic of his experimental approach and his love of the outlandish.
In the context of such a cycle of cultural interaction, Mishima's attempt to modernise the No plays assumes a twofold significance. On the one hand, he has tried to bridge the gap between the traditional and the modern theatre in Japan. How to make the best of the traditional drama and incorporate it into modern drama has become a great problem in Japan today. Borrowing the themes and the structure from the No, Mishima has created plays in a completely contemporary setting, introducing intellectual content, aphorisms and messages relevant to modern times. He has followed the example of Western writers like Jean Cocteau and O'Neill in adding a new, modern dimension to the classical plays. In so far as he has succeeded, Mishima is the only Japanese writer to have re-interpreted the No in the language of modern Japan. On the other hand, by the use of the avant-garde techniques of modern Western playwrights, which, as pointed out, had been introduced from Japan in the first place, Mishima has completed a curious circular pattern of intercultural influences. He is looking at the No as a Japanese influenced by Western ideas and adapting it by applying Western techniques of Japanese origin.

Previous attempts to modernise the No had all failed to rise above the level of curiosities. One of the first modern adaptations were the plays by Kōri Torahiko, a writer who had left Japan to spend most of his life in Europe. Admitting that he was partly inspired by Kōri's Kanawa, Kiyohime and Dōjōji, Mishima notes their weaknesses:

The influence of Hofmannsthal is felt too strongly and the decadent aspect of the No overemphasised.

Kōri's works were fin-de-siècle type of atmospheric plays lacking in substance and content. This is a general shortcoming of most later adaptations. They fail to capture the beauty of language and mood of the No, and, at the same time, they lack the content and character delineation of the modern drama. (The most
extreme 'modernisation' was carried out by Takechi Tetsuji, who introduced revue shows with the use of No masks.)

According to Donald Keene, Mishima's adaptations are "the first successful modern No plays". In the opinion of some Japanese critics, they are the best works Mishima has produced. What is the nature of these adaptations and how do they compare with the classical No? In order to throw some light on this question I propose to discuss Mishima's artistic conception, the poetic nature of the No language and that of Mishima's dialogue, the writer's aesthetic views in comparison with the aesthetics of the No, Mishima's Death and Beauty theme, the philosophical content in his plays, his use of aphorisms and witticism, the choice of plays, psychological approach and portrayal of modern times.

Artistic Conception

The artistic conception of the plays is clearly stated by the writer in a Note on Sotoba Komachi:

My Collection of Modern No Plays was an attempt to create a kind of poetic-drama in the rhythm-lacking Japanese language; I felt that it must not degenerate into tedious atmospheric plays, so I thought I should try and give material expression on the stage to a poetic dimension, which, in its entirety, transcends time and space.

This is a conscious formulation of Mishima's attempt at a marriage of the No ideal to the Western concept of poetic drama. Zeami had conceived the No as a 'poetic dimension transcending time and space'. He spoke of the "style of mysterious flower" as the supreme achievement in the art of No, "a styleless style which surpasses any scheme of grading"... and "transcends the limitations of time and space". Only an accomplished artist after many years of experience was capable of achieving such a style. To Zeami, the 'style of mysterious flower' signified a
Mishima's poetic dimension is of a different nature. It is a realm of abstract notions, a juxtaposition of symbols. In Sotoba Komachi, the stage is the corner of a park where lovers embrace, an old beggar picks up cigarette butts and a poet composes three-penny poems. It could be any park in the world. In fact, it is the world of reality. Time is the moment between life and death, the instantaneous spark of vision between now and eternity. The old woman is the symbol of eternal beauty and the poet is the symbol of mutability. The poetic drama is conceived in the contact between the two. In Hanjo, the mad girl Hanako is the personification of waiting, and her patron Jitsuko is the symbol of non-waiting. The precarious balance between their respective worlds forms the core of abstract drama. In Kantan, time moves freely from reality into the dreamworld. Jirō's kaleidoscopic visions of the life of worldly success follow the pattern of Mishima's intellectual interpretation of the original legend. Poetic drama is created by the inner conflict of ambition and acceptance of life, out of which Mishima's hero finds a rational solution. In The Damask Drum, poetic realm is in juxtaposition of the timeless unrequited love of man to the insatiable thirst for proofs of love on the part of the woman. Delineation between life and death is disregarded and the ghost of the old man is afflicted with the same curse of love's implacability as the living janitor. In Aoi no Ue, Mishima's poetic world is the night when hate and love, pain and joy are poised in embrace, while jealousy assumes a timeless dimension.

There is undoubted ingenuity in this kind of abstract conception of 'poetic dimension, which, in its entirety transcends time and space'. However, one cannot help being conscious of its contrived, rational nature. It is an old axiom that rational art is complex and superficial, bound by the controlling power of the
ego. Great art, on the other hand, is simple and profound, inspired by the awakening of the artist's soul to the all-pervading creative powers. Besides, one is reminded of Nietzsche's words:

All that is pre-arranged is false.

Poetics and Language

Mishima places great emphasis on the poetic nature of the Collection of Modern No Plays. Indeed, he is very conscious of his vocation as a poet:

People say that I am a poet, but perhaps I am poetry itself. (Note on Confessions of a Mask)

In the No Mishima sees the superb achievement of the concept of poetic drama, a perfect blend of poetry and drama:

To begin with, by being dependent on literature, Japanese dancing is dramatic; and yet it is dance-like by not completely relying upon dialogue, so from these two aspects it gives a solution to the difficult task of the dramatic expression of poetry. (On seeing Hanjo)

According to Mishima there is an inherent contradiction between poetry and drama, for drama is an art built upon dialogue, whilst poetry cannot be expressed in dialogue but merely by 'solitary action'. Yamamoto Kenkichi quotes Mishima's idea of poetry as:

something most pure and passive, the ultimate realm of thought and action, rather, something close to action itself.

Ezra Pound has expressed a view not dissimilar to Mishima's. In his study of Chinese characters as a means of expressing poetry, he observes that they "represent things in motion and motion in things". He concludes:

We need in poetry thousands of active words, each doing its utmost to show the motive and vital forces...

Poetic thought works by suggestion, crowding maximum
meaning into the single phrase pregnant, charged, and luminous from within.

On the relation between drama and poetry, Pound's ideas are again similar to Mishima's belief that the two modes are incompatible:

The dramatist usually relapses into inferior poetry or neglects it altogether.

But in the No, Pound also found a successful marriage of drama and poetry. He perceived its poetical comment, which:

carries the mind beyond what action exhibits to the core of the spiritual being.

One problem that is inherent and perhaps insurmountable in the adaptation of the No to modern drama is that of language. In a study of the No, Kyogen and Modern Drama, Takechi Tetsuji has made some pertinent remarks about the comparative nature of their language. According to him, the age when the No and Kyogen assumed their stylised form, from Kamakura to Muromachi, was a time of the highest cultural attainments in Japan, so the words in use then were impregnated with meaning. Because they had a subjective character, they were expressive and not lacking in function, even though they may have been ungrammatical. But as the dynamism of the people declined, the energy of the words decreased too and many suffixes found their way into the language. Decline of cultural standards in the later Tokugawa era brought about a deterioration of the inner energy and expressive power of words. Thus, rhetoric flourished and poetic devices like kakekotoba, engo, joshi and pillow words ended up by becoming stylised, while dramatic words had lost the power of creating forms and were no longer expressing concrete images. Takechi concludes that the qualitative deterioration of words themselves has caused the decline of the standard of modern plays.
Discussing Mishima's *Collection of Modern No Plays*, Takechi points out that although Mishima sought to give life to the flowery style and splendid rhetoric of the No, his attempt has failed not because his literary skill was inferior but because the nature of the modern language has lost the poetic quality of the No language. For example, he notes the excess of little suffixes and exclamatory particles like 'wa', 'yo', 'yo wa', 'chōdai', 'no', 'no ne', etc. These particles have become indispensable in modern speech. They convey modern atmosphere, shades of feeling and realistic touches. However, Mishima's modern jargon overflows with these prosaic particles and suffixes, becoming a verbose elaboration of terse lines of the original No plays charged with intense emotion and pregnant with suggestive poetic reverberations.

Yamamoto Kenkichi also emphasises the aspect of language, quoting an example from *The Damask Drum*. In the original play, the love-tormented old gardener says:

**Shite:** Wasuren to omou kokoro koso  
**Ji:** Wasuren yori wa, omoi nare.

Protagonist: The very heart that thinks 'I will forget'
Chorus: Cannot forget and suffers worse than remembering.

(Gardener: I said 'I will forget'  
And got worse torment so Than by remembrance. Arthur Waley)

The parallel lines of Mishima's janitor Iwakichi are:

Yes, sometimes I think I'll try to forget. But, well, I have come to understand that trying to forget is worse than being unable to. I mean, even if being unable to forget is painful in the same way, it's still better.

Yamamoto Kenkichi comments:

This again is frightfully verbose. The paraphrase
of poetry is not necessarily poetry, and it becomes remote from what Mishima calls 'pure action'. However, such error... springs from Mishima's love of aphorism. We may well imagine how Mishima, when he became enchanted by the intense struggle of this poetic line of the original work, hoped by some means or other to bring the beauty of this verse into his own work. That, after all, is an appropriate acknowledgement of the original model. But the aphorism paraphrased in words like 'well', 'I mean', 'in other words', 'so to speak', 'I dare say', etc. becomes nothing but quibble.

Mishima's dialogue is undoubtedly a far cry from the poetic language of the original plays. This is the most obvious flaw in his adaptations and the greatest shortcoming in his attempt to create a poetic dimension of the No standards. On the other hand, Mishima's dialogue is dynamic and alive, even if not woven of poetic threads with suggestive echoes. If at times it lapses into a verbose play on words, usually it has a rugged rhythmic flow and seems to reflect the spirit of modern times. Because Mishima felt that the contemporary stage dialogue was flat and dull, he used ornate language, which is considered by some critics to be effective on stage. Yashiro Seiichi, for instance, says: In the special magnificent dialogue of these poetic plays, there is at times something captivating, and, surprisingly enough, these plays are considered particularly fine from the viewpoint of stage effect.

On the other hand, Toida Michizo feels that Mishima's dialogue is too affected: The dialogue of characters in the Collection of Modern No Plays flutters vainly just as empty words, and the characters themselves seem to be taken in by the appeal of the shades of meaning in words.
Aesthetics

Apart from the language problem, disparity of the No and Mishima's adaptations appears most clearly in their aesthetic conception. Both Zeami and Mishima devoted much thought to Beauty. Zeami reached the ideal of yūgen as he conceived it in the No. On the other hand, Mishima's preoccupation with aestheticism makes his literature almost 'a literature for Beauty's sake'. What are Mishima's aesthetic ideals and how do they compare with Zeami's beauty of yūgen?

To Zeami, the graceful beauty defined as yūgen was the ultimate objective of the No. Yūgen had been associated with the art of poetry from about the eleventh century and had undergone many variations of meaning. It is a term of Buddhist origin concerned with 'hidden and dark' as the permanent aspects of life and destiny in contrast to the mutability of matter and form. The poet Shunzei developed the ideal of yūgen as an indefinable, subtle form of beauty with a suggestion of loneliness and sadness. He conceived it as a compound beauty of suggestive connotations, meant to convey 'images beyond verbal expression'. By the end of the fourteenth century yūgen had passed into common use, assuming the sense of graceful beauty of elegance and subdued splendour.

Zeami's ideal of yūgen in the No is closer to that later meaning:

A figure which gives nothing but a beautiful and graceful impression is the essence of yūgen; songs and music, when they sound melodious and tuneful, may be said to have the quality of yūgen. In dancing, yūgen will be attained by a dancer who, by constant practice, can present a graceful appearance and, in sober make-up, impress the audience with profound beauty.

In this context, Zeami conceived the No performance with a three-fold purpose: to open the ear - with the beauty of yūgen in music, to open the eye - with the beauty of yūgen in dance,
This conception makes clear the composite nature of the No. It is impossible to appreciate the total harmony of the No by relying on the literary strength of the script alone. The high point of a No performance comes when the music, movement and content blend into one. It may be an instant of stillness when the movement of the performer is arrested in a tableau type of sculptural perfection and the music halted by a conventionalised tap of the dancer's foot. It may be the cumulative effect of a dance which flows out of the chant and loses itself again in the rising tide of music. Again, it comes at times when the scene before the spectators' eyes appears like a series of colour patterns unfolding rhythmically and conveying the emotional mood of the narrative.

For example, in Aoi no Ue, there is a famous dance of lady Rokujo, who appears in the second half wearing a hannya mask that symbolises the angry ghost of a jealous woman. The mask comes to life through superb movements of the dance, expressing alternately anger, torment and sorrow. Yuya dances before her lord Munemori a dance of graceful beauty interwoven with feelings of subdued grief. Yoroboshi's ecstatic dance before his father captures the pathos of their separation by cruel fate and suggests the restrained joy of their final reunion.

These are the yugen expressions of graceful and sublime beauty, at once gentle and tinged with ineffable sadness. It will be seen, therefore, that yugen is not only an aesthetic principle but ultimately a sentiment inexpressible in words, a landscape unseen in form. It lies deep in the heart of things and its sentiment has profound truth. It is an inner beauty of things outwardly expressed by means of art.

Mishima's aesthetic ideals are quite different from those of the No. During the war he started out secluded in his Ivory
Tower of Beauty. His first études were imbued with a dreamlike, delicate aestheticism, running counter to the oppressively rigorous spirit of the age. He assumed the pose of a 'martyr of Beauty'. After the war, Mishima gradually came to dislike his own early tendency toward sentimental lyricism and his exaggerated cult of decadent beauty. According to Okuno Takeo, Mishima reversed his attitude and became 'an advocate of intellectual beauty', relying mainly upon 'sharp analysis, clear-cut definition and accurate logic'. As pointed out by Kiyoshi Jinzai, Mishima assumed the role of 'a mass murderer by beauty'.

In all his works Mishima presents his ideas on beauty. Some of his novels, like The Temple of the Golden Pavilion for instance, are constructed around the theme of the elusive quality of beauty. In other works, he directly discusses abstract notions of beauty, or makes his characters talk about beauty. The same tendency appears in the Collection of Modern No Plays. First of all, in the Notes for Production of Sotoba Komachi, Mishima left the following instructions:

The beauty of Komachi is entirely subjective and not objective. The old woman must look beautiful, old as she is. The striking mutability of all phenomena must be expressed through the person of the poet....

It is absolutely essential for the poet's most important line 'if I think something is beautiful, I'll jolly well say it is beautiful, even if I have to die for it' not to lapse into pathos.

Yoshida Seiichi explains Mishima's approach:

Idealising reality in a dream, the poet dies just as he is about to substitute ugliness for beauty. This is a disguised assertion that a true way of life for an artist is not to embellish the facts of reality in a dreamlike trance and intoxication of youth, but with sober outlook to penetrate life inside out.
Mishima later said that this was "a poetic confession of his resolution as artist". Thus, although aware that the No plays aim at graceful beauty, Mishima does not turn a blind eye to their literary deficiencies, such as their "commonplace themes and sentimental passages". For this reason, with a shrewd perception of the structural and stylistic nature of the No, he cleverly preserved its basic principles while modernising the situation. He set the poetic beauty of the No in the framework of the most ordinary and even vulgar modern scenes. Such bleak settings stand in sharp contrast to the abstract beauty of Mishima's conceptual ideas.

But what are these notions of beauty in the Collection of Modern No Plays? Where does the writer find the elusive, intangible quality of beauty? In Hanjo, the patron of the mad girl sees the heroine as "a flawless, inviolable gem. A dangerous gem." So she wants to protect her from the earthly love of her long-awaited Yoshio:

I have only known Hanako since she lost her mind. But even as such, she is really beautiful. The commonplace dreams she had when she was sane have now been completely purified and have become precious, strange dreams, solid jewels, which a person like you can never hope to understand.

Earlier in the play Jitsuko says to the mad girl:

But you are beautiful. I can't imagine that there is anyone in the world more beautiful than you. Everyone opens too many windows, seeking to improve the ventilation only to lose everything as a result. But you have only one window. Through that window everything in the world enters you. You are the most endowed person in the world.

Whenever Mishima talks of beauty he resorts to unusual, abstract or arbitrary symbols. In other words, Mishima's beauty, like that of the French symbolists, is the beauty of artifice. It is the very antithesis to Basho's ideal of beauty,
which is faint, natural, simple and never extravagant or shocking.

Beauty is undoubtedly the mark that distinguishes the eternal from the temporal in art. But the moment beauty becomes a conscious goal of writing, an intrinsic flaw is created in the work. For,

Beauty is the effect, rather than the cause, the means rather than the end.

Death and Beauty Theme

Discussing Mishima's aestheticism, Yoshida Seiichi points out that from the outset it was accompanied with a 'death will' and had a nihilistic character. Mishima had apparently decided that this was in keeping with the aesthetic tradition of Japan, which is derived from the Buddhist character of the negation of life. In the essay About Beauty, Mishima contends that the special characteristics of the Japanese sense of beauty are:

the absence of God, the lack of conflict with religion and morals and the non-existence of the homo-centric Greek tradition of affirmation of life.

According to Mishima, one of the basic aspects of Japanese aesthetic tradition is the 'interrelation between beauty and death'. In his opinion, this interrelation is perfectly matched in the No plays. Yoshida Seiichi suggests that here lies the basic reason why Mishima chose the No plays for a medium of experimentation. Summing up his critical comments on the Collection of Modern No Plays, he says:

On the whole, they display death on stage, and, to say the least, they talk of death and smell of death.

This can be readily illustrated. In one episode of the dream of Kantan, for example, Mishima's Jirō talks to an empty-headed
modern beauty:

Jiro: Do you believe that there are "beauties" among skeletons?

Beauty: There must be some, for sure.

Jiro: What extraordinary confidence. But you know, when you kissed me just now, I could feel your bones laughing under your cheeks.

Beauty: If the face laughs, the bones laugh with it.

Jiro: Hm, is that what you say? This is what you should say: When the face laughs the bones are laughing. That's for sure. But the bones of a face laugh also when the face is crying. The bones say: "Laugh if you like, cry if you like. Our time will be coming soon."

A baby is born to them and Jiro says; referring to it as their 'first skull'.

Jiro: (turning away) A child is born. Into this dark, gloomy world. Even though it was brighter in his mother's womb. Why should he ever have chosen to come out of it into a gloomier place? It's quite absurd. I don't understand it at all.

Jiro destroys the baby by banging its head with an ashtray.

In Sotoba Komachi, the old woman describes love in terms of death:

Old Woman: It is those couples that are petting on their graves. Look, in the street light filtering through the green leaves, their faces seem deathly pale. Both men and women have their eyes shut. Don't they look like corpses? As they embrace, those lovers are dead. (Sniffs around her.) There's a smell of flowers, all right. At night, the flowers in the park are very fragrant. It is just like inside a coffin. Buried in the smell of the flowers, those lovers are dead people. There is no doubt about it.

In Aoi no Ue, there is another picture of love and death:
Nurse: Now is the hour of love. Of loving, of fighting, of hating. When the daytime battle ends, the night war begins. It is a more gory and abandoned struggle. The bugles of the night announcing the outbreak of fighting are sounding now. A woman sheds blood, dies, and comes back to life time and time again. And she must always die once before she can live. Both the men and women who are fighting have black badges of mourning draped over their weapons. Their flags are all pure white. But those flags are trampled on, crumpled and at times stained with blood. The drummer is beating his drum, the drum of the heart, the drum of honor and shame. Those people who are dying, how gently they breathe. In their moment of death, how proudly they show their wounds, the gaping, fatal wounds. Some men die with their faces in the mire. Shame is the decoration they wear. Look. It's only natural that you can't even see any lights. What you see lying before you stretching into the distance are not houses but only graves.

The mad girl Hanako in Hanjo refuses to respond to love and fails to recognise her former lover Yoshio:

Hanako: No! You are very much like him. Your face is just like his, the face that I've yearned for even in my dreams. But you are different. The faces of all the men in the world were dead, and only Yoshio's face was alive. You are not Yoshio, your face is dead.

Yoshio: What?

Hanako: You are a skull too. A face reduced to bones. Why do you stare at me like that with your hollow eyes of bone.

Toshinori, the blind hero in Yoroboshi, speaks for Mishima in the last scene of the play:

I do frightening things without seeing! For isn't it frightening that flowers should bloom in the world that has come to an end? To water the ground of a dead and finished world?
Then he describes the time he saw the end of the world, when his eyes were burnt out by flames during the war bombings. His ultimate picture of the world is devastating: people blessed with eyesight are as good as blind, the living are no different from the dead. Babies, old men, young people, are all:

simply squeezed in together, like worms silently gathered at night on a rotten tree.

Mishima's approach is the exact opposite to the writers of the No plays, who viewed life through deadhand being through non-being, though it is true that the No moves in a shadowy realm between life and death. They saw permanence beyond the fleetingness of this world. Mishima, on the other hand, distrusts love and is fascinated by death. His death theme obsession is the very antithesis of the Buddhist reflections on death, which pervade the No drama. He talks of death through life. He sees destruction and futility in a world of unreality.

The accent of the No is therefore on hope and faith, not merely on 'negation of life'. Unlike Mishima's heroes, who face despair, futility or self-destruction as victims of their own passion, the No protagonists generally find salvation. The old woman in Sotoba Komachi says:

Komachi:
(chorus - age-uta): Man and Buddha differ not.
By his sacred word
Both ignorant and sage
He has vowed to save.
Then may not the way of sin
Lead to salvation in the end?

Thought Content

Mishima pays attention to the metaphysical content of the No plays too, although he looks upon it basically as a decadent art with its mixture and unity of Death and Beauty. In the postscript
of the separate publication of the *Collection of Modern No Plays* the writer explains that he intended to use the form of the No as a vehicle for conveying "ponderous thought and philosophical content" rather than simply experimenting with an artistic pattern.

Kantan, the first play Mishima adapted, is concerned with the fleetingness of life. It shows that:

the glory's flower has no more truth than an hour's dream.

While the protagonist of the original play awakens to this fact only after taking a nap on the magic pillow of Kantan, Mishima's Jirō is aware from the beginning that:

Woman's a soap-bubble, money is a soap-bubble and fame's a soap-bubble too; and the world we live in is only what we see reflected in these soap-bubbles.

However, Mishima's hero has an original outlook, which the writer later professed to be his own philosophy of life. When Jirō becomes the country's dictator in a dream, one of the spirits of the village of Kantan, a celebrated physician, tries to persuade him to take poison. He tells Jirō about the legend of the magic pillow that makes all those who sleep on it live through a lifetime. In the climax of their dream, the sleepers are always offered an elixir of immortality to make them realise the futility of human existence. But Jirō rejects it and refuses to conform to the pattern:

Physician: ... While they were dreaming, they all lived through a lifetime meekly and obediently. They really lived their dreams. Therefore, it was in order to impress upon them all the more the sense of fleetingness of this life when they wake up from their dreams that they were offered an elixir of immortality in their dream of having become Emperor. To do so was my duty. The others have all obeyed the rules, but what about you?
From the very outset you haven't even tried to live, have you? You are not compliant. Even in your dreams you've turned your back on life completely. I have been watching it all from the beginning.

Jiro: But surely, old man, we are free, even in our dreams. Whether we try to live or whether we try not to live - and that's none of your business, is it.

When Jiro eventually wakes up from the dream, he feels a renewed joy to live this life. This is an example of Mishima's ingenious adding of new meaning to the original model. Muramatsu Takeshi says that Kantan may serve as a handbook for the world of Mishima's creation. According to him:

The main characters of Mishima's plays are more or less Rosei (Jiro) type, and they are waiting anxiously for the coming of the day when the unreal life will gain lustre.

The fleetingness of life is one of the favourite metaphysical themes of the No plays. Sotoba Komachi, for instance, conveys the fleetingness of all life's phenomena, including beauty. The play is interwoven with Buddhist passages about the evanescence of human existence:

Priest and attendant:

shidai: The shallow hills on which we dwell
Enfold the solitude deep within our hearts.

Priest: (sashi) The Buddha that was has passed away
Long before our birth;
The Buddha that is to come
In the distant future waits.

Priest and Attendant:
Between, a dream-world lies
Wherein our days are passed.

Mishima conceived his adaptation of the play also in a metaphysical, symbolical and abstract sense. In Notes for Production of the play he wrote:
Komachi is the metaphysical personification of 'life which has transcended life'. The poet is the personification of the life of flesh, the life in perpetual motion together with the present actuality.

Mishima develops the metaphysical content in rather long-drawn, sophisticated dialogue between the old woman and the poet, in which the old woman explains the secret of her longevity:

Old Woman: ...Long ago, when I was young, I never felt I was alive unless I was carried away by something. Only when I forgot myself did I feel I was living. In time, I realised it was a mistake. When the world seems wonderful to live in, and a mean little rose looks big as a dome, when flying doves seem to sing with human voices... when, indeed, all the people in the whole world greet each other joyously saying "Good morning", when things you've been looking for for ten years turn up in the back of a cupboard, when every girl looks like an empress...when you feel as if roses are blooming on the dead rose trees, at times like that... well such foolish things used to happen to me once every ten days when I was young, but when I think of it now, I realise I was dead in moments like that....The worse the liquor, the quicker it goes to ones head. In my exhilaration, in the midst of those sentimental feelings and my tears, I was dead....Since then, I have decided never to get carried away. That's my secret for long life.

Poet (teasingly): Well then, what is your reason for living old lady?

Old Woman: My reason for living? What a ridiculous thing to ask. Isn't the very fact that I am alive my reason for living? I'm not a horse that runs because it wants a carrot. Running comes naturally to horses anyway.

The striking feature of Mishima's 'ponderous thought' is its explicitness. Mishima tends to express his thought in long-winded verbal conclusions or aphorisms. He never lets the subject speak for itself. This is because his arguments do not come from inner convictions of a soul awakened to deeper truths of life, but
bear the imprint of his intellectual manipulations.

**Aphorisms and Witticism**

Apart from the philosophical content of Mishima's 'ponderous thought', the *Collection of Modern No Plays* overflows with witty puns of modern jargon and Mishima's unique aphorisms. This is in line with his usual practice, for in all his writing Mishima displays an excessive love of aphorism and witticism. Clever turns of dry wit are his forte.

Among his No plays, *The Damask Drum* is the best example of this tendency. Here, Mishima's nimble wit plays with the ideal of love and the sorrows of unrequited passion. Admirers of the heroine discuss love while awaiting Hanako's arrival in the dressmaker's shop:

Kaneko: Which runs faster - love or dog?
Fujima: Well now, which gets dirty faster?

Opening the old janitor's letter to the heroine, the group are both shocked and amused by his frank confession of love:

Madam:...... (reads) "Love is an eternal, never-ending anguish." That's nothing new. He might just as well say: "Vinegar, unlike honey, is sour."

......
Kaneko: All questions are relative. Love is the architecture of the emotion of disbelief in genuine articles.

They conclude that love begins from the tongue, because:

Kaneko: The tongue is not concerned with prestige. All it relies upon is the sense of taste which all of us have. The tongue can say: "This tastes good." It will say no more. That's why it is modest. The "genuine and original" is merely a label people stick on. The tongue does no more than recognise whether the sponge cake tastes good or bad.
Such lines amount to a display of pointless wit and sophistry. They may cause laughter in the audience, but compared with the poetic beauty of the original play, they strike one as a feeble parody of the pathos and solemn mood of Zeami’s work, which poignantly describes the sorrows of unrequited love:

Gardener: The after-world draws near me,  
Yet even now I wake not  
From this autumn of love that closes  
In sadness the sequence of my years.

Chorus: And slow as the autumn dew  
Tears gather in my eyes to fall  
Scattered like dewdrops from a shaken flower  
On my coarse woven dress.  
See here the marks, imprint of tangled love, that all the world will read.

The verbosity of Mishima’s elaborations makes a stark contrast with the pithy lines of Zeami, who conveys the entire conception of emotional conflict in a few words:

Chorus: I thought to beat the sorrow from my heart,  
Wake music in a damask drum; an echo of love  
From the voiceless fabric of pride!

The Choice of Plays

As Yoshida Seiichi pointed out, it is significant that Mishima chose for adaptation only famous No plays of substantial literary content and a strong impact on the audience. Mishima himself is quite explicit on the choice of the plays:

In order to reproduce in modern times the free treatment of time and space, the candidly metaphysical subjects, etc. of the No, I turned to modernising the situation. For that reason, I had to choose from the No plays works with a distinct theme like The Damask Drum and Kantan, or like Sotoba Komachi, Kannami’s controversial work, or plays with a high degree of pure emotion
114. The Waki-No, the No with the main emphasis on dance, and the Genzaimono (living-person pieces) were not only difficult to adapt, but there was no sense in going to the trouble of attempting an adaptation.

Critics have endorsed Mishima's choice. For instance, Toida Michizō points out Mishima's ingenuity in considering only these plays suitable for adaptation. The five plays belong to the YONBAMME (Fourth Group) pieces, which are, theatrically speaking, the most dramatic No plays. On the other hand, Toida says, they are perhaps the least imbued with the lyrical character and the aesthetic ideals of the Heian and Muromachi traditions. Relying more on dialogue and a dramatic conflict of human emotions than upon the Yugen aspect of phrases, song and dance, the Fourth Group pieces are closer to Kyōgen, which were the original prototype No plays according to the hypothesis about the probable historical development of the No. Therefore, Mishima modernised the content, reverting the form to the original type of No.

Psychological Approach

Another reason for Mishima's choice is that these are all Fourth Group plays with a strong emotional appeal or intense expression of pure feeling. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this gave him the best scope for psychological experimentation.

For example, his adaptation of Aoi no Ue is clearly a modern, psychological play revolving around the destructive power of jealousy. In an essay entitled Aoi no Ue and Tada Hodo Takai Mono wa Nai (Aoi no Ue and Nothing is so Expensive as the Things you Get for Free), Mishima himself admits that:
there are elements in Aoi no Ue similar to a thriller play, the theme itself is not philosophical and it has a ready appeal for the audience. But in the final analysis, it amounts to a cheap drama of the malicious jealousy of Lady Rokujo.

In the play, Mishima frequently uses words like "the ghost of a libido", "sex complexes", "sexual repressions", etc:

Nurse: You're a very handsome man, you know. A real Prince Genji. But the discipline for nurses in this hospital is terribly strict. We are all psychoanalysed, so we are freed from all sex complexes. (She spreads open her arms.) All of them. Things are arranged so we can always satisfy our needs when we get an urge. The director of the hospital and the young doctors are very understanding on this point. Whenever necessary, they give us the medicine as prescribed, the medicine called sex. We never have any trouble with one another.

Also, Mishima gives a modern psychological interpretation of the relationship of young Hikaru and his older mistress Rokujo:

Hikaru: In those days I was unsteady, I couldn't settle down. I wanted a chain. I wanted a cage to shut me in. You were that cage. But when I wanted to be free once again, you were still a cage. You had remained a chain.

Mrs. Rokujo tells the woman's side of the story:

Mrs. Rokujo: But you, I know the kind of person you are - first you give the medicine and only afterward you come to inflict the wound. You never do it the other way around. First the medicine, after the medicine the wound, but after the wound you never give medicine... I understand well enough. I'm already an old woman. Once I receive a wound my recovery is not as quick as a young girl's. Each time you say something affectionate I tremble with fright. I wonder what horrible wound awaits me after such an effective medicine. Nowadays, I am happier when your words to me are not affectionate.
On jealousy, Mrs. Rokujo explains verbally what is conveyed in the original play by symbolic presentation of the total performance. She directly tells Hikaru that her ghost of jealousy would kill any younger woman with whom he might fall in love.

Mrs. Rokujo: But I would certainly kill her rather than die myself. My spirit would leave my body while I was still alive, and it would go to torture her. Harassing, torturing and tormenting her, my living ghost would not let go until it killed her. She, poor creature, would die haunted night after night by an evil spirit.

In Hanjo, the psychological framework is the combination of lack of fulfilment in reality and a state of permanent fulfilment in the act of expectation. Yoshida Seiichi sums it up:

The contrast of the two ways of life is here described. The painter has nothing to wait for, and is afraid of losing a way of fulfilment in reality, while the mad girl lives in the permanent state of longing. If we look upon the joint existence of these two people as a whole, an ideal model of human existence comes out of this lack of fulfilment in reality and living with expectation and longing.

The theme of waiting and non-waiting is described in a poetic dialogue between the painter and the mad girl, which is an attempt at imitating the rhetoric of the No language with the use of pivot words. The word 'matsu' for example, is used in both its meanings: "waiting" and "pine tree":

Jitsuko: I have never once waited for anything.

Hanako: You don't have to worry about it. You don't need to wait. But in this world there are people who have to wait. As for me, my body is filled with waiting. The evening dusk always comes to the moonflower and the morning to the morning-glory, but I wait, I pine, yes, my body is filled with prickling pine needles. Aren't human beings creatures that go on living by waiting
and making others wait? What would happen if one's whole life were a process of waiting?

In Sotoba Komachi, the psychological conflict is between love and death, beauty and age. Mishima explains in the Notes for Production that in Komachi he conceived the embodiment of a person who is never defeated, and in the poet, the romanticist 'aspiration to tragedy'. The contact between the two, he says, is based on a kind of 'mutual yearning of a mixture of misunderstanding, curiosity and contempt'.

The combination of dreams and reality in Kantan is interspersed with Freudian jargon. After killing his own baby, Jiro says:

Jiro: He's better off this way. If he had lived to grow up he would some day have had to worry over his resemblance to his father. Everyone goes through that experience.

On the whole, though the psychological approach is at times effective, one becomes too conscious of Mishima's Freudian puns and psychological interpretations, his wit, satire and intellectual humour used to an excessive degree. While his dialogue may be intellectually absorbing, the overall feeling of these plays is that they portray an unreal life of the writer's conceptual creation.

The characters of Mishima's adaptations come to life, but they have an impersonal quality. They talk and act as people of the twentieth century, while symbolically representing the eternal in human nature. In fact, they could be enacting a human drama anywhere in the world. Hence the success of the plays in Western theatres.

**Portrayal of Modern Times**

It is difficult to determine how far Mishima's adaptations capture the spirit of modern times. The question is whether they
truly portray contemporary climate and the sentiments of the Japanese today, or whether they are largely products of the writer's Western orientated, conscious creation. Here, one must remember that Mishima conceived the plays as abstract, symbolical 'poetic drama'. Also, one calls to mind what Mishima said when speaking at the University of Michigan on The Literary Climate of Japan Today:

The mode of living in Japan today is a hopeless confusion of the East and the West. One eats his bowl of rice on the tatami, wears his tie and coat, jams into the subway, and goes to his Le Corbusier supermodern office building. We all bear such confusion and even ignore it. If so, why shouldn't the novelist also express the same confusion in his works.

The Collection of Modern No Plays is a perfect example of such confusion. While based on the purest remnant of the Japanese classical tradition, it is a collection of ultra-modern works, thoroughly identified with the current international literary standards.

In his modern interpretation of the classical works, Mishima adopted the technique of contemporary Western dramatists like Cocteau, O'Neill and Brecht. He re-created the ancient symbolism in the light of the new vision of life and a personal interpretation of the world. Thus, the disillusioned young man in Kantan refuses to die and succeeds in accepting life by a conscious, rational determination. The modern woman in The Damask Drum, in her inability to love, turns a deaf ear even to the love calls of the ghost of the man who loved her. No salvation is offered to the aged beauty in Sotoba Komachi, who is doomed to the fate of wretched loneliness. The ghost of jealousy of a modern socialite lady in Aoi no Ue cannot be pacified, but brings vengeance of death upon her young rival. The mad girl in Hanjo refuses to be restored to sanity by her returned lover. The lovetorn young
dancer in 《Dojoji》 abandons the passion of her self-destructive emotion and decides to compromise, by accepting the advances of a stranger. The allegorical parody of 《Yuya》 has a similar quality of modern paradox.

On the whole, the nature of these purposeful distortions is such that one may accept them as products of contemporary climate, but one cannot help feeling critical of them as adaptations of the No ideals. For the sentiments of the No plays are noble and tragic, pervaded with religious tones and inspiring the feelings of 《yugen》. The accent of Mishima's plays is the complete reverse. Their sentiments are light and blasé. They are rationally contrived by a conscious artist. They are devoid of any religious or higher aesthetic ideals.

One realises that there is a fundamental factor which accounts for the disparity between the No and Mishima's adaptations. This is the difference in the attitude of Mishima as against that of the creators of the No plays. As we have seen through the rough outline of Mishima's career, his creative approach has constantly been marked by a Western type of rational perception, in spite of his strong interest in classical Japanese literature.

The No artists were imbued with the spirit of 'awakened submission' - an aspect of the sublime state of 《Yūgen》. This is an attitude of mind behind the finest expressions of the traditional Japanese creativity: 《wabi》, 《sabi》, 《yugen》, etc. It connotes a serene acceptance of man's fragility pitted against the cosmic powers. It springs from an enlightened insight into the highest reality of a superscientific realm. In Zeami's terminology, it constitutes 'the bone', the 'pre-art' of creation. Or, in the words of T.S. Eliot, it is the realm of 'pre-logical mentality' of the subconscious.
In sharp contrast to this, Mishima is led by the intellect rather than emotion, logic rather than intuition. He sees life and the phenomena of this world in fragmented parts, whereas the No captures the totality of things. His plays are created from the mind and not directly out of life or from the wellspring of enlightened inspiration.

This brings us to the all-important question of this discussion: To what extent can one accept Mishima's modern No plays as authentic and legitimate adaptations of the No?

In answering this question, one must not be misled by the seemingly remarkable appeal Mishima's modern No plays have had for an international range of audiences because of their modern setting and universal language. In Germany, Sweden and the United States especially, they were highly appreciated. At one time they were being performed in twenty-four German cities simultaneously. In Sweden, they were referred to as 'Anouilh-style plays'. The New York Times reviewed them in 1961 as pure drama expressing a poetic vision and introducing modern colour that can be readily appreciated in a foreign country. It should be noted that the plays were received in these countries as avant-garde drama completely unrelated to the No. This is not surprising since the audience on the whole had no knowledge of the No. But because Mishima's adaptations can be appreciated as modern, Western drama, their "No-ness" is not basic to them as drama; that is, Mishima has not relied on his adaptations being No plays; he has, to the contrary, used themes, ideas, and characters from classical No drama, but has not carried over the essence of the No - its composite nature, aesthetic ideals and religious content. Nevertheless, there is sufficient of the No in his adaptations that the Japanese audiences can enjoy them; indeed, a presentation of Mishima's No plays seems to have had a fair degree of success in Japan. But how far did the Japanese enjoy them as No plays,
and how far as Shingeki? The fact that they are called No plays must surely have had some influence on the judgement by the Japanese audiences; but since Mishima has the reputation for being an experimenter, presumably the Japanese were prepared to make allowances for the fact that these adaptations were not really No drama.

For example, Toida Michizo says:

> While the Collection of Modern No Plays may be great works, I do not feel inclined to consider them as works that have succeeded in bringing to life in modern times the No plays as traditional drama.

.....

> To sum up, it seems to me that these works may be even considered as a parody of the No, but they cannot become No plays.

The answer to the question posed should be based purely on a comparison of these plays with their prototypes. I have already shown that they are quite remote from the basic ideals of the No, for Mishima ignored the essential qualities of the No art and only borrowed the framework of the originals to carry out completely free re-interpretations ranging from parody to allegory. This can be illustrated by summing up the main points of contrast between the No and Mishima’s plays.

Dramatic activity in the No transcends the bonds of time and space, reducing life to the simplified and symbolic portrayal of human experience. Mishima’s goal was to create such a poetic dimension of transcending time and space. But his abstract framework remains just an obvious, conscious scheme. In contrast to the No protagonists, his characters are portrayed in full complexity of ambiguous trivialities of modern times. They act consciously in the manner of characters from Western plays, and do not capture symbolically the inner movement of the spirit in the style of the No.
Besides, Mishima's conscious scheme of moulding his work in accordance with a borrowed idea is superficial and diametrically opposed to the approach of the No artists who strove to attain complete mastery of their art so that they could possess creative power 'transcending time and space'.

Mishima expressed clear-cut ideas on the nature of poetry. He started out from fixed notions of what poetic language should be. But his dialogue in modern No plays fails to evoke the splendid rhetoric and stylised language of the No. On the contrary, his language ends up by being verbose and prosaic. In parts, it sounds like a trivial parody of the original plays. The weakness of Mishima's language in comparison with the poetic beauty of the No lines is pointed out by many critics.

Mishima departs from the No altogether in the realm of aesthetics. He seeks in beauty the expression of the abnormal, strange, extravagant and shocking. This is the very opposite from Zeami's ideal of 雅(tested) as:

half-revealed or suggested beauty, at once elusive and meaningful, tinged with wistful sadness.

Mishima's preoccupation with beauty is of a conceptual rather than intuitive nature. Thus beauty remains only a conscious goal of his writing without becoming an integral part of his art.

One of the attractions of the No for Mishima is its 'unity of Beauty and Death'. Again, he takes up only the superficial aspect of the No themes and fails to capture deeper undertones of Buddhist reflections on death. His negative emphasis on the haunting omnipresence of death, his tone of despair and destruction are completely devoid of the No accent on hope and metaphysical transcendentalism.
Although Mishima set out to introduce "ponderous thought" in his plays and emulate the "candid metaphysical content" of the No, his deliberate aphorisms and contrived elaborations are only weak distortions of their prototypes. He generally has too much to say and says it explicitly or too emphatically. The result is an overwhelming impression that the writer is displaying his wit rather than communicating profound thoughts to the reader. One is always conscious of Mishima's clever puns and carefully calculated messages.

By a clear statement about the reasons for his choice of plays, Mishima reveals his scheme. He chose the most dramatic No plays with a suitable framework for portraying intense human emotions and creating a drama of powerful impact. To show his scholarship, Mishima selected the form of the original type of No and often changed the No plots to a story closer to the original sources. On the other hand, in modernising the situation, he introduced ultra-modern touches, Freudian puns and avant-garde techniques of contemporary Western playwrights.

In conclusion, Mishima's adaptations amount to clever manipulations of the classical plays. They highlight his ability to borrow and combine the old and the new. They show his love of the outlandish and his desire to impress. While they manifest his clever use of the original models, they also reveal his lack of feeling for the integrity of the classic art. On the other hand, the Collection of Modern No Plays may be taken as the best example of the brilliant versatility of Mishima's pen. With this feat of literary experiment, Mishima has proved his claim that he can turn his pen to any subject.
CHAPTER FIVE

MISHIMA - THE PARADOX OF MODERN JAPAN
Discussion of Mishima's modern No plays raises many questions. It accentuates, for example, the disputable point whether the No is adaptable into a modern dramatic form. It touches upon the problem of the future of the No and brings out the need to re-evaluate the place of this classic art in modern Japan. Will the No be preserved as an authentic, traditional art form, or will it have to undergo transformation in accordance with the developments in the world of Japanese theatre? Will it remain a source of inspiration for the future artists and how will they re-interpret the spirit of the No in terms of the twentieth century? What significance has the world of the No for the Japanese of today? Each of these questions introduces vistas of discussion which could become the subject of a new chapter. For the purpose of this thesis, however, my main concern is to examine Mishima's experiment in modern No plays and relate it to his work in general. As mentioned in the first chapter, these plays are considered by some critics to be the most characteristic of Mishima's work. Bearing in mind their experimental nature and the fact that they were written almost fifteen years ago, I have endeavoured to view the Collection of Modern No Plays in the overall context of Mishima's work.

In the preceding chapters I have discussed some of the basic themes in Mishima's early works, his dramatic techniques and the way he utilised the classical No drama in his modern No plays. I have also mentioned the controversial nature of these plays, their conflicting reception in Japan and in the West and the ambivalent attitude of the Japanese critics towards Mishima. Ever since the international success of his modern No plays Mishima has probably been the most discussed writer in Japan. He has been called a classicist, a romantic, a modernist, a stoic, "a prodigious child of the war", "l'enfant terrible of Japan", etc. The criticisms made of him have been mixed and often emotional. Nevertheless, they all add up to the picture of Mishima as the most controversial
literary figure in postwar Japan. Today, a writer of worldwide fame with a long stormy career behind him, Mishima is still a symbolic paradox of modern Japan: he is both avant-garde and conservative, both traditional and cosmopolitan. For the older generation, he is too modern; for the younger generation, he belongs to the old school of writers. Yet, both generations feel compelled to talk about him, for Mishima is too important and provocative to be ignored. Thus the literature on Mishima has grown over the years to a considerable volume.

In order to make an assessment of Mishima's position in modern Japanese literature and present my conclusions about some aspects of Mishima's literary work as highlighted by the *Collection of Modern No Plays*, I intend to draw on the critical comments about Mishima in so far as they appear to be pertinent.

Generally speaking, there are several main factors contributing to the controversy about Mishima: he has a tremendous output of all types — consequently the standard of his work is uneven; he writes in too many forms and tries his hand in a variety of media, which is contrary to the traditional Japanese artistic ideals; he experiments all the time and relies too much on his brilliance; he is interested in form, rather than the substance; there is a strong Western influence on his work, although he purports to be devoted to the traditional ideals; and, he is constantly trying to bridge the gap between the old and the new.

Mishima's output has been prodigious: in the span of twenty years he has produced fifteen long plays, ten one-act plays, eight modern No plays, eight Kabuki, dance and operetta plays, twenty-one novels, numerous short stories, essays, articles, poems, etc. Apart from the works of 'pure literature', he has produced popular fiction too. (*The School of Flesh*, etc.) Although he displays considerable literary skill even in this genre, it is difficult
for a writer who produces so much to retain a consistent standard. Here, Mishima is probably a victim of the present day publishing system and literary climate: the commercial pressure from the publishing firms and the need to keep in the forefront of literary publicity have often forced many writers like Mishima to sacrifice quality for quantity. Even Mishima's remarkable technique could not always compensate for the poverty of substance in some of his works. And while variety may be a sign of versatility, it can also be an indication of shallowness.

Japanese artistic tradition lays emphasis on the mastery of one medium. According to the ancient artistic precept, often quoted by the followers of Zen, to achieve a perfect artistic expression one has to "draw bamboos for ten years, become a bamboo, then forget all about bamboos and draw!" In other words, an artist must enter the form completely to be able to come out of it with true creative freedom. For only after completely mastering a form can the artist rise beyond the bounds of the form and give vent to his inspiration. The best examples of this are Sesshū's paintings and Bashō's haiku. Also, the principle is manifested in practice by the No performers trained according to the methods described by Zeami.

Mishima's attitude is diametrically opposed. He is always trying out new forms and changing techniques. He is the first Japanese writer who has not only written in every possible literary form but tried his hand at acting, film producing and singing. In this, he resembles modern Western, especially American artists, rather than the traditional Japanese artists. Consequently, he has provoked opposition on the one hand, while winning sympathetic praise on the other hand.

Closely related to this attitude is Mishima's tendency to experiment. As mentioned earlier, his whole literature has been
a series of experiments of an astonishing range: since adapting the No plays into modern drama, he has produced a film (Yukoku, 紫国, Patriotism) using the No stage as a setting and made a Japanese adaptation of French medieval drama (Sado Kōshaku Fujin, サド侯爵夫人, The Marchioness of Sade.) The critics can therefore never catch up with him, because no one can predict what Mishima's next experiment will be.

The paradox of Mishima becomes most clear in the context of his continuous efforts to blend the old and the new, to combine the Japanese with the Western. A crowd of apparently incompatible influences throng into his work: Japanese classics and avant-garde novelists like Raymond Radiguet and Jean Genet, Mori Ōgai and Oscar Wilde, Japanese Romantic School and psychological novelists of Europe. Although Mishima is always eager to emphasise his national traits, the fact that he has absorbed so many Western influences has led some Japanese critics to say that his work is typical of the cosmopolitanism of modern Japanese bourgeoisie and that he lacks national character. Western critics, on the other hand, maintain that although his work has international appeal, it preserves unique national traits.

Probably owing to Western influences, Mishima devotes a great deal of attention to form, style and technique, often neglecting the inner qualities of the work. Such outward emphasis is the antithesis of the Zen dictum that "substance is everything and form is nothing". Nevertheless, Mishima has produced works that have been generally recognised as successful; so it transpires that they have to be judged by new standards. The onus is on critics yet to assess Mishima's work in the light of new developments and contemporary literary trends in Japan.

However, critics have hitherto shown perplexity and a certain diffidence in regard to Mishima. Although most of them feel that
he has departed too far from the traditionally accepted roles of a writer, they are reluctant to express outright criticism of him. On the other hand, a new generation of critics versed in modern Western literature welcome Mishima's revolutionary changes in methodology. Also, leading writers like Kawabata Yasunari have supported Mishima from the beginning and praised his style. Some critics have even claimed that Mishima is creating a new style, a new literature. I believe the shortcoming of this new literature is that it has no depth. It is gifted, it has great ingenuity, but it has no message. Mishima has produced technically brilliant works, but ultimately, one is hard-pressed to find whether he really has something to say apart from intellectual puns and abstract paradoxes. His modern No plays are a case in point: a feat of masterfully executed experiment, they are a vain display of erudition, wit and ingenuity.

In the analysis of the Collection of Modern No Plays I have shown how Mishima starts off from an abstract conception and moulds his material into the pattern of his intellectual making. He adopts the rational method of imposing one's ego upon the work of art. The traditional Japanese way, on the contrary, is to lose oneself in the work and create by intuition. Mishima does not trust intuition. He relies on logic and carefully thought out methodology.

Mishima is quite explicit about his methodology. He has a habit, rather unusual among the Japanese writers, of repeatedly explaining his creative method in postscript notes and essays. As mentioned earlier, he had analysed in detail his artistic conception of the Collection of Modern No Plays. In the same way, he often makes theoretical comments on his works. Perhaps the best example of Mishima's self-analytical writing is an essay entitled My Creative Method, written for the Bungaku magazine in February, 1963 and published later in My Wandering Age.
Here, Mishima describes four basic steps in his novel-writing: discovery of subject, study of the milieu, building up of structure and the process of writing. The essay is prefaced with the following words:

My efforts in methodology are ultimately for the purpose of activating my subconscious to the highest degree. My subconscious mind never sets to work in the undetermined and formless state. There are some writers whose subconscious mind, oddly enough, works from the mushy state of confusion. I am not this type of writer. My mind is not free unless I tie it down somehow, firmly determine my direction and objective and decide in detail on the path leading up to it.

This is an indication that Mishima adopted the analytical method basically reacting against the "I-novelists'" technique of realistic sketching. Many writers have opposed the Naturalist school tradition of the haphazard stringing together of incoherent autobiographical events, but no one as consciously as Mishima. From his writing and self-analytical essays it is evident that Mishima had devoted a great deal of effort to developing a Western style methodology. The influence of the techniques of Western writers from Joyce to Proust, from Sartre to Camus has often been felt in the works of modern Japanese writers; in Mishima's case, one is reminded above all of Henry James - the conscious artist.

The positive side of Mishima's analytical methodology is the ingenuity of structure in his works: he lays down solid foundations, works on elaborate development and builds up an effective climax. In fact, his works stand out in Japanese Literature with their clear, Western type of structure. On the debit side, however, Mishima's literature largely gives the impression of artificial, contrived art.
Many critics have noted this. For example, Isoda Koichi says:

*I do not know of any other literature, so unnatural, so carefully contrived as Mishima's.*

Isoda feels that Mishima carefully constructs his works, but even in the best of them, such as *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, the reader is always conscious of the contrivance. Mishima's portrayal of the psychological crisis in the hero of the novel and his calculating selection of events leading up to the climax of burning down the Golden Pavilion are no doubt brilliant. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that the novel is artificially constructed. Actions of the stuttering acolyte in this novel, as well as the behaviour of the heroines of *The Thirst of Love* and *The Lioness*, confirm Isoda Koichi's impression that:

*Mishima's characters consciously enact living people.*

In plays, perhaps even more than in novels, Mishima's characters lack the living quality. This is understandable in the *Collection of Modern Nō Plays* and the *Tropical Tree*, conceived as experiments in poetic and expressionist drama, where characters are used mainly as types or symbols. However, the prevailing impression of most of Mishima's plays is that he handles his characters like puppets, making them enact a drama devised by a controlling intellect. *The Burning House, The Saintly Woman, The White Ants' Nest, The Rose and the Pirate*, etc. - all have the same shortcoming: as pointed out in Chapter 3, they are typical examples of Mishima's intellectual creating of artificial characters and contrived plots.

This predominance of intellect is one of the main characteristics of Mishima's writing. His literature may almost be called the product of intellect, or, as the Japanese critics say,
A great portion of Mishima's famous novels indicate a shallow perception and cheap intellectual manipulation. This is because Mishima leans upon his cleverness to the point of becoming a tool of his own talent. He tends to muddle things all together, creating disharmony. Also, he seems to be content with half-measures - a phenomenon often seen in 'child-wonders' and clever men, which is one of the most undesirable things in art.

Although Itagaki's criticism may be exaggerated, it does strike at the core of Mishima's creative approach. For Mishima is essentially a literary virtuoso who relies too much upon his brilliance and never commits himself soul and body to his subject. In other words, he creates mainly from his frontal lobe, as Okuno Takeo aptly describes:

Mishima takes up an idea that is set off by a story or a picture and builds it up into a story by means of intellectual manipulation. He does it in much the same way as if he were playing with wood-blocks or solving a chess problem; and he uses for his material the knowledge he has acquired from books.

We have seen how Mishima used the ideas from the original No plays and cleverly manipulated them in his adaptations. The framework of the No served him as a setting for his intellectual play and psychological experimentation. In much the same way he constructed The Lioness from the Greek tragedy plot. Such pattern of intellectual manipulation may in fact be traced in all his works based on previous models. But true literature cannot be created by the mere process of intellectualisation. All great literature, and Japanese artistic tradition in particular, demand of a writer an intuitive appreciation of life and nature, which can only come from complete artistic commitment, matured experience
and deep understanding.

Zeami spoke in this context of artistic identification or "true intent". According to him, an accomplished artist tries to bring himself into the heart of the natural objects rather than to bring them into the subjective sphere of his mind. He strives to minimise the activities of his ego and not to allow personal elements to enter the process through which an object in nature is transformed into its equivalent in art. Therefore, Zeami stresses that the world of the No is primarily that of the unconscious. In contrast to the realm of the conscious, which is complex and superficial, the world of the No is simple and profound as it is liberated from the controlling power of the ego.

Mishima, on the contrary, belongs to the type of artist who treat art as a medium of ego-expression and a means of self-assertion. He creates with a calculating intellect and analytical reason. Here again, his way is diametrically opposed to the No method of grasping reality by intuition rather than reason and presenting it by symbols rather than statements. The No attempts to convey something that cannot be expressed through analytical reason, so it depends on music in the most important part of its expression. It appeals not to the intellect or emotion alone, but to the whole body of the person who watches the performance.

According to the Japanese artistic tradition, an artist is a vessel which contains potential creative energy. He may fully express this energy only with complete self-abnegation and devotion to his art. Many Japanese writers and scholars have been outspoken on this point. Not only the authorities of Zen tradition like Daitetsu Suzuki, but even the young writers brought up in the era of strong Western influence. For example, Nakano Yoshio says in his essay Koko no Seishin, The Spirit of Aloofness:
in the wanderer Bashō, who did not stop polishing his haiku compositions until his last breath, we can sense a passionate, spirited devotion, close actually to ferocity.

If one does not have the kind of moral energy which causes one to kill the Buddha on encountering it, or kill one's forbears on encountering them, it is better from the beginning to refrain from literature. This kind of devotion to literature is precisely the thing that moves a person regardless of minor details of technique.

Mishima also shows considerable creative energy, but his efforts are devoted mainly to technique and style. He is a conscious stylist throughout his work. In his essay My Creative Method he expressed the view that creating a style that has original density is the first premise and the ultimate goal of writing, and critics have often commented on Mishima's preoccupation with style. Hino Keizo 二野啓三, for example, says this:

There are few writers who have begun their work being as keenly aware as Mishima that creating a work means creating a style.

Mishima works consciously on his style just as a stonemason chisels away at his rocks. I think one might even say that he stakes the originality of his whole sensitivity and thought on each sentence of his works. There lies his glory as a fastidious artist who refuses to rely on bare facts, and hence the limpid quality of his works; at the same time, from this springs the danger of ending up with only the style.

In a sense, it is not surprising that Mishima is so concerned with matters of technique and style, for this is a general trend of modern times. 'Discipline', 'craftsmanship', 'skill', and 'technique' are most frequently used words in modern criticism. This is related to the emphasis we place on 'technique' and 'know-how' in our technological civilization. For many modern writers and artists, 'how' has become more important than 'what'.
However, an interesting aspect of Mishima's style is the fact that it reflects his dual background: his love of the classics and his wide reading in European literature. He is one of the few contemporary Japanese writers who have succeeded in combining the language of the classics with the European flavour of the modern language. Here again, he fulfils the role of fusing the old and the new. Uramatsu Samitarō says:

Mishima's precocuous talent is most clearly expressed in his style. He takes entirely and freely uses the philosophical vocabulary of the early Showa. Hence he is able also to employ theory absolutely freely and to introduce particular European nuances in his work. Moreover, he takes a rich vocabulary from Japanese classics, weaving it skilfully into his style. This is also a reason why his style gives a feeling of something fresh and European, without smacking of translations, while at the same time being permeated with a Japanese nostalgia.

The influence of the classics is felt particularly in Mishima's early works. The style of his first collection of short stories, The Forest in Full Bloom, is so coloured by the influence of the Heian diaries, that Jinzai Kiyoshi was prompted to call Mishima "a legitimate inheritor of our aristocratic literature". From that time, Mishima had developed a characteristic, excessive use of rich metaphors and flowery expressions, which was enhanced particularly through his association with the Japanese Romantic School, as pointed out by Yamamoto Kenkichi:

On looking at all Mishima's early works, they are flooded with numerous expressions and gorgeous phrases, which seem to have been adopted from the Japanese Romantic School. Mishima once said that he was fond of the style of the No plays, which excessively relies on rhetorical flourish to the point of being described as figured brocade.
Apparently, one of the reasons Mishima chose the No for a model was this attraction to the rhetorical flourish and the flowery language of the No plays. He strove to emulate the language of the original plays, but he failed because of the weakness of the modern language. Nevertheless, he created a kind of poetic dialogue, which was praised by some critics for having captured the echoes of the No plays.

Takechi Tetsuji, for example, claims to have produced Mishima's plays successfully as real No plays. He suggests that Mishima had evoked the rhetoric of the No to a certain extent, although he points out the superiority of the No language over the modern jargon of Mishima's plays:

I produced several of the Collection of Modern No Plays: The Damask Drum in the No style, Sotoba Komachi as an opera, Hanjo and Dojoji as radio plays incorporating No elements.....

The production of these Mishima's works in the style of the No might seem a pointless atavism. However, their stage effect was in fact splendid. Mishima's rhetoric actually sounded full of life in the No songs and the Kyogen mode of expression, and its conceptual content was such that it could not have been given full life by means of the explanatory lines along the style of the New Drama. The only drawback is that the words of Mishima's plays were rather verbose to be put into the No songs and Kyogen phrases. This is not to say that Mishima's talent is inferior, but merely that the internal energy of the modern language itself has declined in comparison with the energy of the language in the days when the No songs and Kyogen were created. 234.

Another critic, Yashiro Seiichi, praises the poetic quality of Mishima's language in modern No plays:

Especially in the Collection of Modern No Plays, Mishima clearly departs from the drama of everyday language.....

The writer's original, extremely condensed and,
for that reason, florid style can better be described as lines to be recited than spoken.

Mishima's works of his first period, including these plays, are brimming with lines of rhetoric, aphorism and paradox. If one considers why this is so, of course, it is a natural result of the writer's own disposition and his dramatic views; but besides, it was the young writer's defiance of the exceedingly flat dialogue of realistic plays at the time.

Although Mishima's attempt to write in the style of the No plays was abortive, he has undoubtedly created an unusual combination of stylised rhetoric and vigorous colloquial language. His modern No plays may therefore be considered a feat of stylistic experiment.

Poetic use of language has always been the aim of Mishima's writing. From childhood he has shown an extraordinary sensitivity to words. Apparently he believed that words were the elements of feelings and developed a great skill in their imaginative use. He describes his infatuation with words in the autobiographical story Shi o Kaku Shonen 詩を書く少年 (A Youth Who Writes Poetry):

Because of the excessive solitary reading, he was developing anemia. But he was still unconcerned with his own ugliness. For poetry was something different from such unpleasant physiological sensations. It was different from all things. By composing poetry with subtle lies, he learnt a way of telling strange lies. If only the words were beautiful, it was all right. So every day, he diligently read dictionaries.

This confession reveals the background of Mishima's extraordinary capacity to use words. One of his generally recognised gifts is the ability to produce beautiful combinations of words. In their Study of Modern Literature, Yoshida Seiichi and Shioda Ryōhei 塩田良平 quote passages from A Youth Who Writes Poetry,
comparing Mishima's rich use of metaphors and unusual combination of images with the style of Kawabata Yasunari and Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一：

When the youth became enraptured, a metaphorical world always appeared before his eyes. Caterpillars changed the leaves of cherry trees into laces, thrown away pebbles went past the bright oak-trees to gaze at the sea. Cranes ransacked the wrinkled sheet of the sea on a cloudy day looking for drowned corpses down below.

Around the people scampering off in a mad rush the air was whirling in confusion and stickingly coiling in a circle like the flames flickering behind the figurines of the Buddha. Sunset glow is an ill omen of the colour of dark reddish brown. Winter trees have thrust their artificial limbs out to the sky. And the naked body of the girl by the fireplace looked like a flaming rose, but when she walked up to the window, it came to light that she was an artificial flower: her skin, covered in goose-pimples with cold, changed into the fluffy side of a velvet flower.

Such metaphorical expressions, based on direct sensation and subjective insight, have been in vogue among the Japanese writers since the heyday of the New Perceptionist School. Used in moderation, this flowery style can be quite effective. But Mishima indulges excessively in ornate language and elaborate metaphors. Often, he shows inability to resist superfluous ornament and one gets the impression that his metaphors are forced into the context for effect. This is particularly jarring in his modern No plays, because the basic principle of the No composition is to convey the meaning in the briefest words. Mishima's dialogue, on the contrary, overflows with affected metaphors and an excess of soul-clogging words. For example, the old janitor in Mishima's adaptation of The Damask Drum says:

......My heart hurts. Because it has never known such happiness before, it is weak, like the
stomach of a poor man's child before a feast. It hurts because it has been struck by happiness.

Needless to say, passages of this nature sound artificial and unconvincing. However, Yamamoto Kenkichi has an interesting explanation for Mishima's use of flowery language and fancy turns of phrases:

It seems that the flowery language and the fancy turns of phrases in Mishima's works rather serve the purpose of restraining the tear-jerking nature and sentimentality of the style that might be considered the Japanese literary tradition since the Heian era. Even today, one can find writing steeped in sentimentality without in the least employing flowery language and a fancy turn of phrases; but we may say that Mishima's use of these devices is conceived more as an irony to such phenomena.

Critics are divided on the poetic quality of Mishima's language. Some say it is the forte of Mishima's literature. Others feel that he overdoes the use of poetic devices and creates an artificial style. The Collection of Modern Nō Plays, considered as Mishima's stylistic tour de force, was particularly the subject of critics' disagreement.

Apart from style, technique and methodology, the most frequently discussed aspect of Mishima's work is his aestheticism. Mishima's continuous quest for the meaning of beauty marks him as a twentieth century type of international artist. For one of the predominant themes of art in this century is the questioning of "what is beauty?" Following the trends of the age, Mishima has perpetually discussed beauty in abstract terms and expressed extraordinary ideas about the role of aestheticism. For example, in a short essay entitled Hankō to Bōken (Defiance and Adventure,) written for the Gunzō of April, 1949 Mishima stated:
With the chisel of my aestheticism I carve out a huge image of an ugly monster out of this world, and then with the same chisel I destroy it. Then, the vision of the God of beauty appears in the same atmosphere and fills it.

Conceiving beauty as an instrument for penetrating all phenomena and a means of attacking the vulgar realities of this world, Mishima provoked the criticism that he "flourished a dangerous weapon of beauty" in the postwar climate. As mentioned in the comparison with the aesthetic ideals of the No, Mishima's aggressive, shocking and destructive beauty is a complete contrast to the traditional Japanese sense of unobtrusive, natural and simple beauty.

In discussing Mishima's aestheticism, critics have often compared it to the aestheticism of other Japanese writers. Noma Hiroshi, for example, points out the difference between Tanizaki's and Mishima's concept of beauty:

Tanizaki was Japan in the ascendancy and Mishima was indeed Japan just prior to collapse. Tanizaki was on the offensive and Mishima in a defensive position. However, Tanizaki's beauty is, on the contrary, in fact temperate, mediocre and has no spear that pierces through everything; but Mishima's beauty is aggressive and seeks to go to the very end.

This comparison is pertinent because both Tanizaki and Mishima are sometimes classed as the writers of the "aesthetic school". However, Tanizaki's aestheticism developed increasingly towards the traditional Japanese concepts of beauty, whereas Mishima continued his pursuit of the outlandish, extraordinary and shocking beauty.

Another comparison may be drawn between the aestheticism of Mishima and Dazai Osamu. In both Dazai and
Mishima's literature, beauty is the main essence and the prime subject. In addition, the pursuit of evil is intertwined with their quest for beauty. But Dazai and Mishima differ in their notions of evil: to Dazai, evil seems to be what is opposed to social justice. It is related to the consciousness of the original sin. To Mishima, on the contrary, Beauty is Evil and Evil is Beauty. This is manifested in his idolatry of handsome, but intrinsically evil characters in the novels like The Green Age and The Forbidden Lust.

Thus beauty assumes a variety of garments in Mishima's literature: aggressive, evil, shocking, abstract. He talks about it all the time and explains his notions on beauty rather than producing beauty in his work and letting it speak for itself. Hence one is always conscious of Mishima's artificial beauty and never convinced by it.

Noting the changing accent in Mishima's concept of beauty, Okuno Takeo says that Mishima's literature is dominated by artificial beauty and useless ornament:

We may say that Mishima aims in literature at the creation of an aesthetic realm. The lyrical, mysterious beauty of The Forest in Full Bloom, the elaborate, ornate beauty of The Thief period, the harmonious beauty in the style of the Greek sculpture like that of The Forbidden Lust, - even though the content changes from stage to stage, it seems that he has consciously aimed at making his works perfect beauty itself.

Mishima's literature may in fact be called "a literature for beauty's sake". Like the hero of The Temple of the Golden Pavilion Mishima is constantly obsessed with the visions of beauty, which interfere with his interpretation of life and reality. In his inability to grasp and express natural beauty, he resorts to artificial means. According to Isoda Koichi, Mishima is "an epicurean who worships beauty", and advocates the beauty of
artifice. Isoda quotes Mishima's words from *Kyôko's House*:

> Nowadays, what is called "natural" has died out. (and so)... to develop a poetic, metaphysical beauty, such as possessed by the physique of the Greeks, there was no other way but to rely on the artificial method.

During one phase of his work, Mishima aspired to a "Hellenistic type of beauty" as expressed in *The Sound of Waves* and *Apollo's Pillar*. His concepts of anthropomorphic beauty are of the Western and not the Japanese aesthetic tradition.

According to another writer, Hirabayashi Taiko, Mishima conceives human nature with two dimensions: Apollo and Dionysus. Beauty, in Mishima's interpretation, arises when "these two dimensions collide giving off sparks". This combination of the reflective and the dynamic in human nature as constituents of beauty is typical of Mishima's love of contrast.

The use of contrast is one of Mishima's favourite techniques. The best expression of it may be seen in his basic theme of Death and Beauty equation. The development of this theme in Mishima's early works has been discussed in the previous chapters. It is significant that Mishima's confessed main reason for the attraction to the No was the fact that he saw in it a perfect blend of Death and Beauty. From the analysis of the *Collection of Modern No Plays* it is apparent that an underlying obsession with Death and Beauty pervades Mishima's modern No plays.

The paradoxical combination of Death and Beauty is not merely Mishima's contrived solution to his abstract notions on beauty. It springs from his psychological background and its roots may be traced back to Mishima's childhood. In an essay on Hayashi Fusao, Mishima says:
It is only natural that I should have seen in the
title of Hayashi Fusao the symbol of a collapsed
age. Because to me, as a youth, it was in fact a
ew age of setbacks and emptiness. And because,
since the incident of February 26, 1936, with which
I was confronted in childhood, the concept of set-
backs and emptiness became set in the core of my
aesthetic notions.

Kubota Mantaro 久保田万太郎 emphasises that the concept of
'setbacks and emptiness' and the concept of tragedy and death are
indispensable conditions in Mishima's understanding of beauty:

Surely, these two things, Beauty and Zasetsu (i.e. death, tragedy, setbacks and emptiness)
are the very core in the formation of Mishima's
literature; to examine and clarify truly the
changes of blending and interaction of these two
things means in itself to reveal the true nature
of Mishima's essence. Therefore, in studying
Mishima, to distinguish and recognise in his
works the contradiction and unity of Death and
Beauty becomes indeed very important.

Tensions of the pre-war crisis and the war disasters formed
a background to Mishima's obsession with Death and Beauty. His
Collection of Poems at the Age of Fifteen reveals a state of
anxiety and almost a pathological attraction to Death and disaster.
It begins with the following verse:

**Evil Disaster**

Each evening I stood at the window waiting for
something terrible and unexpected to happen, -
for savage and wicked dusts of disaster to come
pressing forward toward me from beyond the street
like rainbows in the night.

January, 1940.

Such were the adolescent visions of the young writer at the
outbreak of the war. As Kubota Mantaro points out:
These very feelings of a youngster who waits hopefully for an 'accident' or a 'disaster' were altogether romanticist, and in them are shrouded the abnormal smell of the war and the shadow of death. So, Mishima evidently began writing poems and novels from Romanticist feelings, weary of waiting for a 'disaster', and, of course, he started out from dreaming about Death and Beauty.

During the war the shadow of death continued to loom in Mishima's dreams and visions, which is reflected in his early works. In the war atmosphere, his aestheticism was a kind of psychological escape from fears of catastrophe and disaster. It seems that in beauty he was able to find relief from the oppressive influence of the war and the fears of death. Thus beauty became the main object of his aspirations. Kubota Mantarō says:

The linking or unification of Beauty and Death is indeed the core constituting the backbone of Mishima's work; on the other hand, in the case of Mishima during the war, Beauty had not yet been grasped as a concept of conflict which Schiller defined as the unification and integration of freedom and inevitability, or the Natural and the Rational. Mishima cherished, as it were, a concept of commonplace beauty, and beauty existed exclusively as the object of his aspiration.

Mishima continued to aspire to beauty throughout his later work. But in his early works particularly, from The Forest in Full Bloom to The Middle Ages, the recognition of Death is intermingled with the classical Japanese concept of Beauty. The romanticist realm, common to all these works, was unmistakably that of the Japanese Romantic School, which adopted as its motto Yasuda Yōjūrō's saying from an essay entitled About the Japanese Romantic School:

The value of human life must be proved by death.
At the basis of Mishima's preoccupation with Death and Beauty there is an inherent nihilism. The end of the war brought about a collapse of all spiritual and social values. A wave of nihilism swept the country, and for Mishima's generation particularly, life became a delusion. Unable to face the complexity of new realities, many writers turned to death, nothingness and unreality. When the belief that "the world is unreal" became prevalent in the postwar climate of despair, Mishima apparently maintained that the role of an artist was to place the flowers of man-made beauty upon this "world of unreality". In this context the omnipresence of artificial beauty in Mishima's work and the nihilistic undertones of his aestheticism assume a fuller meaning. For he says at the end of his essay Shin Fashizummu-Ron 新法西ス論 (Discussion of New Fascism):

> Beauty fulfils the role of bringing back the vision of a nihilist, who is prone to make nothing into an absolute and to stare into the abyss of relativity.

Critics put various interpretations on Mishima's nihilism. Nakamura Shinichirō 甲村真一郎 calls both Dazai and Mishima writers of nihilism. According to him, the leitmotif of Dazai is the thought of the chance of death, whereas Mishima, also preoccupied with death and aware that life is unreal, prefers to believe that "life is a rose".

Hino Keizo 野名景三 views Mishima's nihilism in a positive light:

In the determining period of the birth of his spirit, Mishima stood confronting the collapse of the world, and, as mentioned earlier, his mental make-up was developed from the depths of nothingness; but his unique character lies in the fact that he took up this nothingness, which the majority of the youth of his generation considered as an easy conclusion, to be his starting point; - this
put many demands upon him.

He made up his mind not that 'everything is permissible' since there is no ultimate meaning in the world, but that because of its very meaninglessness one has the responsibility to create a new meaning and correlation. His art materialises from that determination.

In that sense, Mishima's literature is the literature of nihilism. But it is not a literature that advocates nihilism.

On the other hand, there is a psychological explanation of Mishima's nihilism. His wartime isolation in the aesthetic Ivory Tower, his romantic dreams of Death and Beauty, his growing alienation from the world since the war - are all consistent with Isoda Koichi's opinion:

To Mishima, spirit is not something that arises from psychological inevitability, but appears rather as an experimental room set up by himself. It seems to me that he is not rejected by life as an existing being, but that he had rejected life before beginning to live.

In the chaos of postwar spiritual disorientation, Mishima undoubtedly showed marked trains of nihilism. Whether one interprets it as a pose, an escapism or a means of self-defence, the imprint of nihilism is noticeable particularly in Mishima's early works and it is reflected in his continuous preoccupation with the theme of Death and Beauty.

Apart from its aesthetic content and nihilistic undertones, one of the distinguishing features of Mishima's literature is his psychological approach to writing. He shows keen perception into the psychological background and the motivation behind the actions of his characters. Confessions of a Mask was his first successful novel in this train. Okuno Takeo points out its significance:
The greatest significance of the *Confessions of a Mask* was the fact that it opened up a clue to the method of insight into oneself and even scientific understanding of human beings in Japanese literature, which had had no other method but merely to capture human beings sentimentally and superficially without any insight into the self. Such a method of creating literature by pursuing with keen analysis the true motives and meaning hidden in people and society and grasping it with sufficient self-insight is, I think, the basic element of creative writing of almost all Western European modern writers like Proust, Joyce, Gide, Mauriac, Kafka, Green, Marlo, Sartre, Camus, etc. It is an important matter that Mishima found the clue to this method of self-insight, which was utterly lacking in Japanese literature.

The psychological method Mishima adopted in the *Confessions of a Mask* was, according to his own admission, a means of recapturing himself in the state of growing alienation from the world. With psychological analysis he endeavoured to penetrate to the core of human beings, debunk superficial sentimentality and challenge the values of an alienated world. Hino Keizo sees this attitude as a form of self-defence on Mishima's part:

In Mishima's literature, while psychology is the method of his novels, at the same time, it is a wordless indictment of the age in which normal actions have become impossible, and another form of indirect revenge upon the world of actuality that had rejected him.

While in the beginning there may have been personal reasons for Mishima's adopting a psychological method in novel-writing, he later developed it as one of his favourite techniques. In fact, most of his works are constructed on psychological themes. The world of his novels and short stories like *The Thirst of Love* and *The Lioness* is often a gloomy psychological realm centering around revenge and murder. His narrative is never a mere description of events. In contrast to the realistic sketching technique of the
'I-novelists', Mishima pursues with keen analysis the psychological processes in his characters. For example, in Death in Midsummer, one of his most successful short stories, he depicts the psychological dissension between husband and wife brought to a climax by the calamity of their children's drowning. He focuses attention not on the accident of drowning but on the psychological effect it had upon the crisis in the family life. Similarly, The Temple of the Golden Pavilion is not a story about the famous incident of burning down the Golden Pavilion, but a skilful analysis of psychological processes in a young psychopath of the schizoid type.

In plays even more than in novels Mishima relies on his psychological method. With few exceptions like Rokumeikan, which is based on a historical event, almost all his plays fall into the category of psychological salon drama. Even his modern No plays may be called experiments in psychological drama in which he used the framework of the No to portray the jealousy of an older mistress, the conflicts of love and death, beauty and death, waiting and non-waiting, man's love and the woman's thirst to be loved, etc. Although his psychological portrayal is basically sound, he often tends to use Freudian jargon and psychological interpretation to an excessive degree, as indicated by details from the Collection of Modern No Plays. Here again is a typical example of Mishima's technique taking prominence in his work and diminishing its life quality: his psychological framework is often masterfully conceived, but he becomes a slave of his own contrivance, with the result that a flaw of artificiality is created in his final product.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Mishima's literature is its thought content. Mishima is not a writer of deep convictions and profound thought. He is a man of dry wit and keen intellect. Okuno Takeo sees him as a writer of "logical accuracy, keen analysis and clear-cut definition", but with
The range of the subjects and themes of Mishima's novels is surprisingly narrow. His themes are limited just to Beauty and Libido; the subjects beyond that, of people at large, ethics, God, society, life - are completely lacking.

This criticism is only partly justified, because Mishima has shown great versatility in writing about a variety of subjects. When he does touch upon more important issues than Beauty and Libido, however, the hallmark of his philosophy is a kind of urbane, intellectual cynicism. He disregards all established values and decries the sentimental morality of the Japanese, particularly in recent works like *Rudōtoku Kyōshitsu* (A Classroom of Immorality). Consequently, there is a great deal of resentment towards Mishima in Japan today and his popularity has become reduced only to the small circles of his admirers. Also, his intellectual cynicism has led some critics to say that he has no philosophy of life. Itagaki Naoko, for example, feels that Mishima is not serious in his way of life and that he shows no integrity as a writer. She stresses that a writer's work should reflect his way of life and his compassion for the people at large, whereas Mishima's literature, according to her, is devoid of such underlying philosophy.

On the other hand, it may be argued that Mishima has a stoic courage to assert himself as a free thinker and to challenge all accepted values. He has defied critics' attempts to label his work with a convenient 'ism' and shown a vigorous independence of thought. He is one of the few writers who have managed to survive unscathed in the controversy of 'politics and literature' or the 'art for life's sake' faction versus 'art for art's sake' schools. Whilst showing no apparent concern for the political and social implications of his work, he does discuss serious issues.
Moreover, Mishima has often stated that he conceives literature as a vehicle for conveying serious thought. Nevertheless, the limited range of ideas and the eccentricity of thought seem to me to constitute the greatest deficiency in Mishima's work. Besides, his 'messages' come in the form of isolated judgements and explicit statements and not as a natural conclusion from the overall content of his work. He appeals above all to the intellect, showing contempt for emotions, and relies on logic rather than intuition.

Yagi Yoshinori views Mishima's attitude in the light of the twentieth century tendency towards intellectualisation:

The reason why Mishima is aiming primarily at the reader's head rather than heart is clearly because he is a man of modern generation, or rather, because he is a modern man. In other words, it is because modern people almost have no heart. If we may say that the nineteenth century was the age of 'Nature', our twentieth century is the age of 'journalism'. 'Nature' appeals directly to our emotions, whereas 'journalism' appeals only to our 'judgement'. Newspapers, radio, movies, theatre, paintings, music - all make constant demands on our judgement. Rather than simply admiring nature, we first try and turn our ears to 'interpretations' of nature. We live today in an age of 'judgement'. Politically, socially and even culturally. Therefore, to us living today, 'heart' is a useless white elephant. It is sufficient if one is merely capable of making clever or cunning judgement. For this reason, if one sets out to deal an effective blow to modern people, rather than aiming at the opponent's heart, one should first aim at his skull. Because that is the most vital point of modern people. Today, we are not easily defeated by tears, but to logic we take off our helmet readily. The reason why Mishima Yukio's style is logical is because he himself knows better than anyone else how effective a weapon it is to put out modern people.

This criticism throws important light upon Mishima's literature.
in general and is particularly relevant to his modern No plays. The No, as mentioned earlier, is a composite art which appeals directly to all the senses and emotions of the spectators. Mishima’s modern No plays, on the other hand, represent an attempt to create an amalgam of the conceptual and poetic drama with an exclusively intellectual appeal. The complexity of spiritual and emotional impact of the classic art is completely disregarded in Mishima’s plays, which are dependent entirely on the conceptual communication of words. Thus the unfolding layers of suggestive meaning in the original No plays are substituted by Mishima’s verbose play on words, aphorisms and intellectual puns.

It has been frequently noted that Mishima’s writing is brimming with paradoxical aphorisms. He seems to have cultivated the use of aphorism under the influence of Oscar Wilde in an effort to rise above the excessive sentimentality of the 'I-novelists' tradition and develop a cool intellectual style. Yagi Yoshinori has a pertinent comment on this point too:

Mishima’s style, which is almost made up of analytical logic and paradoxical aphorism, no doubt gives a strange feeling as well as appearing novel to the readers who have hitherto been used to reading the style of omnipotent realistic sketching. It is a style dried up to an extreme degree. For Mishima tries to write not 'as he sees with his eyes' but 'as he sees with his head'. For this reason, Mishima’s works demand of the readers first and foremost mental exercises before the response of the heart. People who find no pleasure in these 'mental exercises', are by nature averse to Mishima’s work.

Although Mishima’s aphorisms can be intellectually absorbing, they are often introduced out of context as if they were merely aphorisms for the sake of aphorisms. While they are an effective display of wit, in Mishima’s writing their use is often exaggerated.
and jarring, as indicated in discussion of the Collection of Modern No Plays.

Critics disagree in their assessment of Mishima's use of aphorism. Takeda Taijun discussed Green Age as an example of Mishima's writing overflowing with aphorisms and artificial techniques:

Mishima abundantly stores up techniques in order to make his novels into works of art that have three-dimensional depth. His use of aphorism too is one of these techniques.

Okuno Takeo is critical of the fact that Mishima's literature is "full of cynical aphorisms and meaningless paradoxes." On the other hand, there are critics who find the paradoxical aphorisms in Mishima's writing especially appealing. Terada Toru says:

Mishima's thought expression is dressed in stringent, poetic-prose style, and behind his 'aphorism' there is a kind of childish impetuosity and a logical grasp.

The appeal of Mishima's style, at a glance, rests upon a certain delicate 'logical chaos'.

As an example of Mishima's aphorism, Terada quotes a line from Death in Midsummer:

Whatever death it might be, death is a kind of matter-of-fact procedure.

This sort of cynical comment stamps the seal of Mishima. But his paradoxical aphorisms give his writing a unique flavour. Donald Keene notes it in discussing Mishima's technique in The Lioness and he quotes:

Shigeko mortgaged what little happiness she had left, and she tried to redeem one reliable unhappiness.
Such paradoxical expressions may be found throughout Mishima's literature. Of the Collection of Modern No Plays, The Damascus Drum is most conspicuously overflowing with them. The old janitor, Iwakichi, for example, has this to say about love:

(Love)..... is something that shines on the one you love from the mirror of your own ugliness. 280.

Later in the play, an admirer of the heroine and a sophisticated member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kaneko, also comments on love:

.....Love is the architecture of the emotion of disbelief in genuine articles..... 281.

To say the least, such expressions are strikingly unusual and original. Fukuda Tsumeari evaluates Mishima's technique of using paradox and aphorism in the wider context of the problem of modern language usage:

At times, the metaphorical rhetoric together with a lighthearted twist, adroitly switches a lie into a truth. In that instant, psychology clearly turns into metaphysics. The words depart from the unmasked face of reality and a mask is accomplished. Hence Mishima's fondness for aphorism.

.....The charm of prose art, which depends on words, lies in this. So that even though Mishima's writing may to some people appear very painful and to other people quite meaninglessly haphazard, this, in the final analysis, is probably because the tradition of literature as an art of words has not yet been established in the present day Japan. The vulgar psychological approach to the novel, which, on the pretext of simple real emotions looks with suspicion at beauty as false, moreover, modern Japanese language, which has been completely besmirched by such tendencies, are increasingly driving writers like Mishima into uncomfortable straits as they feel a mounting resistance towards such oppression. At the same time, in Mishima we can see for the first time an abundant talent which
Indeed, Mishima may justly be called a pioneer of a new technique of using words in modern Japanese literature. For although his unique combination of paradox and aphorism may at times appear absurd and hardly comprehensible, he has undoubtedly introduced a stylistic novelty which is influencing many young writers of today.

One of Mishima’s basic techniques and a marked feature of his literature is his borrowing. He borrows from Western and Japanese sources, from the classics and from contemporary works. Needless to say, all writers, whether consciously or unconsciously, draw to some extent on the wealth of the previous literary sources. But in Mishima’s case, borrowing is a conscious technique, as manifested especially in the *Collection of Modern No Plays*. The question arises: why does Mishima always borrow? Because, the critics say, he lacks the experience of life. In youth, he was confined within the narrow world of aristocracy and led an eccentric, secluded life. As a precocious genius he achieved literary success at a very early age, largely owing to his bookish knowledge and extraordinary sensitivity. To compensate for his lack of experience, he tended to borrow from outlandish sources or write about things that people did not know, as pointed out by Usui Yoshimi and Nakamura Mitsuo in a discussion of Mishima’s early works.

In the postwar climate of new vistas opening up there were great opportunities for writers to enrich their experiences. But Mishima, who had lived through the war isolated in his Ivory Tower of aestheticism, turned his back on the postwar actualities. Having rejected the realities of life, he began to borrow from a variety of sources, drawing on the experiences of others. Thus he developed a great skill in utilising the knowledge he gained from
books and cleverly adapting his chosen models, as evidenced by most of his early works. The Collection of Modern No Plays, The Lioness and The Thirst of Love are merely outstanding examples of this trend in Mishima's work. However, there is a fundamental flaw in such a creative approach: it lacks the life-blood of personal experience. Sugiura Mimpei is most outspoken on this point:

Mishima's work falls rather into the category of reinterpretation of the classics. Ever since Franz Grillparzer and Friedrich Hebbel such works have been produced in modern Japanese literature only as second-rate works.

Hence, the fact that Mishima does not produce 'original works' seems to suggest some deficiency in him.

This is so. Above all, there is a lack of accumulation of experience in him. To create works, especially novels, it is necessary to have rich experiences and a skill to express them. The experience indeed becomes the material for the work. It is possible to experience the life described in other people's works, but no matter from how excellent a work this experience may be, it is ultimately, after all, a secondary material, because it cuts out a variety of complex, rich elements charged with reality according to the writer's preference, thought and judgement, and although it may be easy to understand, there is no scope in it for actuality which had not been perceived by others. When all is said and done, second-hand experiences will become a material for parodies like the Collection of Modern No Plays, but one must say that they are a poor source of literary creation.

The main deficiency in Mishima's literature seems to be the poverty of his living experience. Even Mishima's considerable talent could not overcome this limitation.

This criticism was made twelve years ago. Since then, both Mishima's life experience and the range of his subjects have expanded considerably. The mere output of his writing is an indication of the dynamic grasp of his creative genius. Nevertheless,
his works still fall into the category of an insulated art removed from the common stream of life, which is as necessary to literature as the blood to the body. Life is communalised experience and any attempt to side-track that experience to one's own whim ends up in failure. Therefore, if the best of Mishima's literature is yet to come, it is hoped that he will produce in the future from the wellspring of his experience of life rather than rely on his bookish knowledge and competent technique for manipulating classical themes or 'events with a classical character'.

Related to Mishima's excessive borrowing is the cosmopolitan flavour of his work. This is the mark of his modernity and the essence of his paradox: A writer of great erudition, versed in the cultures of both the East and the West, he does not belong completely to either world. His literature is therefore a complex blend of the Japanese core with a superstructure of Western techniques.

Some Japanese critics take an extreme view of Mishima's cosmopolitanism:

Mishima's novels are a literature of cosmopolitanism; which at the same time implies that his literature is lacking the special Japanese quality and a national character.....
The greatest deficiency in Mishima's literature is this lack of national character. This shortcoming springs from the fact that Mishima is not creating from the Japanese actualities.....
On the other hand, this weakness may account for the sustaining of Mishima's popularity, and it is probably a source of joy to foreign scholars.

Western scholars of Japanese literature take the opposite view. They believe that Mishima retains a truly national character, while creating works that have a universal appeal.
Donald Keene's assessment of the *Collection of Modern No Plays* is particularly relevant on this point:

Mishima's most outstanding plays are his modern No plays. They are inspired by the No plays which have on stage phantoms and living ghosts that hardly appear in modern plays.

Owing to Mishima's able pen and the tight structure of the No, a vision of the modern world is created in these plays. It is certainly not at all an exaggeration to say that the fact that Mishima's No plays have been performed in several countries in a foreign tongue is a sign of their universal character. These plays are undoubtedly truly Japanese, but they are not Japanese works that can be appreciated only in Japan.

It is in this light that the *Collection of Modern No Plays* assume a special significance as representative works of Mishima's literature. His intention was to make completely contemporary adaptations of the No plays, which would have a universal appeal and which would be wholly intelligible to an international audience. He attempted to express the essence of the classical Japanese drama in a modern context. Using Western techniques he tried to create conceptual drama from the lyrico-dramatic tone-poems of the original No. He set out to convert the intuitive art of No with its world of symbolic understatement and refined suggestiveness into the rational art of Western-type modern drama with its emphasis on wit, invention and intellectual absorption.

How far Mishima succeeded in so adapting the No is a relative question. The answer to it would no doubt vary from person to person according to the degree of each person's understanding of the No and depending on the interpretation of the purpose of adaptation. My answer is that Mishima's attempt is essentially a failure because the integrity of the No art is incompatible with the concepts of re-creation and adaptation. The discipline
required in the creative expression of this composite art is
untranslatable in terms of modern 'techniques'. Here lies the
unavoidable dichotomy between the No and modern drama: the No
is an art of real creative freedom attained by the complete
mastery of its techniques; modern drama, in complete contrast,
lacks discipline and has too much superficial freedom bordering
on licence. Therefore, when the writers of modern drama adopt
the No as a medium of expression, they only take its outward form
without endeavouring to absorb its inner qualities: the discipline
in its process of learning and the spiritual composure behind its
creativity. Hence all attempts to imitate or adapt the No,
including Mishima's modern No plays, have ended by becoming
dilatantish and abortive.

Nevertheless, the fact of ultimate importance is that Mishima's
modern No plays represent a striking cross-blend of the two
worlds: the world of the No, symbolising the artistic tradition
of the old Japan, and the spirit of modern times, which inevitably
pervades all Mishima's work. In the juxtaposition and inter-
action of these two worlds the image of Mishima Yukio is reflected
in its full complexity. For Mishima, who chants the No or Kabuki
songs and writes novels about flying saucers, is truly the paradox
of modern Japan. He is the "symbol of an age" and the victim of
a time of transition. His heart, like the hearts of most Japanese,
is caught between a nostalgia for the past, to which it is tied
by indestructible bonds, and a tireless quest for innovation,
which characterises the Western-culture-conscious new Japan. In
a word, Mishima embodies the dilemma of the modern Japanese
intellect trapped between irreconcilable East and West.
1. 

Ningen : a literary magazine, published from January 1946 to August 1951 - a total of six volumes or sixty seven issues and four additional separate issues. The magazine was actually founded during the war, in 1945, by a group of writers residing at Kamakura including Kume Masao, Kawabata Yasunari, Satomi Ton, Takami Jun, and Nakayama Gishu, who started the Kamakura Bunko and patronised the Ningen until the fourth volume, when the publishing was taken over by the Meguro Shoten.

Apart from publishing the works of established writers, the magazine is noted for introducing many new names in the early postwar days. Mishima Yukio was one of the young writers who gained recognition largely through the support of the Ningen group.


2. I am relying on Mishima's own account of the reception of his modern No plays in the West. Among other sources, Mishima quotes the New York Times, Saturday, 4.2.1961 and Howard Taubman's criticism, but I was unable to procure the original copies.


3. Ibid. p. 149.

Also, there is a list of "Performances in foreign countries" based on the English translation by Donald Keene, published by Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1957, giving details of performances held in the following cities: Honolulu, San Francisco Westport Conn., New York, (U.S.A.); Kerang (Australia); Mexico City (Mexico); Hamburg, Saarbrücken, Göttingen, Heidelberg, Bremen, Kiel, (Germany); Stockholm (Sweden).


5. Yoshida Seiichi 吉田精一 (12.11.1908 - ):
A scholar of Japanese literature, born in Tokyo. Graduated from the Japanese Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University in 1932. Lecturer at Tokyo University and professor at Tokyo Education University. Yoshida Seiichi has advocated the study of modern literature from the standpoint of aesthetic positivism. Also, he has made a great contribution towards the development of research in comparative literature. (See the L.M.J.L. Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 123)

6. Onryō-mono 怨霊物: 'revengeful ghost' piece, one of the subdivisions of the Fourth Group No plays. (See note 11.)
All translations of the classifications of the No plays are taken from the Unesco Collection of Representative Works, Japanese Series, The No Drama, Vols. 1, 2, & 3. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle, 1960. (See Vol. 3, Introduction, p. XXIV.)

7. Tsure 追 : attendant, companion.
The principle actor in a No play is called Shīte 仕手 (performer, or protagonist), who may have one or more attendants, Tsure, and is supported by the Waki 芳, (bystander, or deuteragonist) and his one or more attendants, Waki-Zure; in addition, there may be a boy's role, Kokata, and a 'walk-on', Tomo.

8. Waki 芳: 'bystander' in a No performance; also called a 'deuteragonist', although his role is quite different from the role of a deuteragonist in the Western concept. Waki often has a function of merely summoning Shīte on the stage.

9. Hannya 死后: a female demon; Hannya No Men 死後男, 'a female demon's mask' is used especially in the 'revengeful ghost' pieces of the Fourth Group No plays. (See note 11.)

10. Yonbamen 四番目: the 'Fourth Group' plays are the fourth main division of the No plays. There are altogether 94 plays of this group, which are further subdivided into several subdivisions:
a) Jun-Kazura-Mono 洋髪物, or 'semi-female-wig' pieces;
b) Jun-Waki-No 洋髪物, or 'semi-Waki-No' pieces;
c) Yūgaku-Mono 遠葉物, or 'displaying of accomplishments' pieces;
11. The following are considered to be the main divisions of the No plays:

1) **MONO-GURUI-NÔ**物狂能, or 'mad person pieces', in which the hero, a woman or a man, is possessed by a kind of madness (different from the modern concept of insanity). These are further divided according to the type of dance in the piece and according to the subject, i.e. whether the play depicts the madness of a mother in pursuit of her lost child, (e.g. **SUMIDA-GAWA**隅田川 The River Sumida), a lover parted from his or her beloved, (e.g. **HANJO**班女), or a grieved child separated from its parents (e.g. **YOROBOSHI**弱法師).

2) **GENZAI-MONO**現在物, 'living person pieces', or **HITADEN-MONO**直面物, 'a true mask piece'; the heroes of these plays are invariably actual living people and not 'ghosts' or possessed spirits. (These two subdivisions are representative of the Fourth Group plays).

3) **NINJÔ-MONO**人情物, or 'hilarious pieces'.

5) **GAKU-MONO**楽物, in which, technically speaking, the protagonist dances a **GAKU**楽 dance.

6) **SHUNEN-MONO**新念物, or the 'haunting spirit pieces'.

7) **JO-NO-MAI-MONO**序ノ舞物, or 'introductory dance pieces' and

8) **SHINREI-MONO**神霊物, or 'god spirit pieces' with a god dance.


Throughout the thesis I have used my own translations, except on rare occasions when a repetition of an existing translation could not be avoided. (e.g. some phrases from **Five Modern No Plays by Yukio Mishima**, translated by Donald Keene. London, Secker & Warburg, 1957)


16. Ibid., p. 949.

17. Ibid., p. 950.

18. Ibid., p. 951.

19. Ibid., p. 951.

20. Cheng Chung-chi 枕中記, (The Pillow Records) by Shen Chi-chi, a Chinese writer who lived from 722 to 789 AD.


23. SHIRABYŌSHI 白拍子: a medieval female dancer in a white robe wearing a sword and a man's headgear. The introduction of shirabyoshi dances into the No performance was an important phase in the development of the No drama.


25. KAZURA-MONO 節物 'female wig piece', or the 'Third Group' Nō play. There are about 40 pieces in this group, which are divided into the following subdivisions:

a) JO-NO-MAI-MONO 序之舞物, or 'introductory dance pieces'. These constitute the majority of the Third Group pieces and are further subdivided into:
   i) DAISHOKO-NO-JO-NO-MAI 大鼓ノ序之舞; plays with a quiet, introductory dance accompanied by big and small hand-drums, and
   ii) TAIKO-IRI-NO-JO-NO-MAI 太鼓入ノ序之舞; plays with a quiet, introductory dance accompanied by a horizontal drum as well as hand drums.

b) CHŪ-NO-MAI-MONO 中之舞物 or 'medium tempo dance pieces'. These are also subdivided into:
   i) DAISHOKO-NO-CHŪ-NO-MAI 大鼓ノ中之舞, or 'medium tempo dance accompanied by big and small hand drums pieces' and
   ii) TAIKO-IRI-NO-CHŪ-NO-MAI 太鼓入ノ中之舞, or 'medium tempo dance accompanied by a horizontal drum as well as hand drums pieces'.

c) IROE-MONO 伊吹物 or 'simplified dance pieces' and
d) MAINASHI 舞い or 'danceless pieces'.
26. CHÚ-NO-MAI 中之舞 : 'medium tempo dance'. (See note 25.)

27. HEIKE MONOGATARI 平家物語: (The Tale of the Heike)
A thirteenth century epic, compiled anonymously, dealing mainly with the struggle for power between the Taira family (Heike) and the Minamoto family (Genji) at the end of the 12th century.

28. 'YUYA MATSUKAZE WA GOHAN'熊野松風は御飯: "Yuya and Matsukaze are cooked rice." A proverbial saying. Cooked rice being the staple food of the Japanese and eaten at almost every meal, the saying indicates the popularity of Yuya and Matsukaze by equating them with it.


30. Ibid., 995.

31. Michi-yuki 道行: the term associated mainly with Kabuki plays, denoting a wayside scene where a lover and his sweetheart, driven by a villain, are seen in flight. In the No plays, it signifies passages in which the narrative describes a changing scenery along the course taken by the protagonist. For example, in Yuya, the passage from Munemori's palace to the Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto is poetically depicted.


35. KYÖRAN-MONO 狂乱物: 'lunatic pieces'. (See note 11.)


37. Ibid., p. 1019.

38. Gendai Nihon Bungaku Daijiten 現代日本文学大事典 (Translated as the Lexicon of Modern Japanese Literature and abbreviated to L.M.J.L., see note 1.) Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965.
CHAPTER III

39. Mishima gained the praise of being the writer of "the renaissance of old Japan" particularly in the early stages of his literary career. See for example Narushishisumu no Ummi - Mishima Yukio Ron, (The Life of Mishima Yukio) by Jinzai Kiyoshi, Bungakukai, March, 1952.

40. JÖRURI: A form of song-narrative drama recited to the accompaniment of SAMISEN (Shamisen)*. The length of its lines was determined by the melody and not strictly confined to the rules of metrics. The old JÖRURI was just like street storytelling, or popular recitations of ballads and gossip. However, Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725) raised it to high artistic standards. Since his time, JÖRURI has been known primarily as puppet plays, marked for the living quality of their words and their dynamic content. (There is a brief excerpt from Chikamatsu's writing on JÖRURI translated by Donald Keene in his Anthology of Japanese Literature, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1957, pp. 386-390.)

* SAMISEN = a three-string instrument, often called a "Japanese Balalaika."

41. Taishō era: 1912-1926. (The reign of the Emperor Taishō.)

42. BUMMEI KAIFA: "Civilisation and Enlightenment." A term used in the early stages of Meiji, when the first wave of Westernisation swept Japan after a long period of the 'closed country' policy. It brought about indiscriminate adoption of Western things and radical social changes. Many middle class families rose to higher social ranks after the new Meiji constitution which allowed for greater social flexibility.

43. Niwa-Kai Zasshi: A Peer's School publication. Mishima wrote for it from his middle school days. His early literary endeavours are described in the autobiographical story SHI O KAKU SHÖNEN, (A Youth Who Writes Poetry). (See Mishima Yukio Tampen Zenshu, (Complete Collection of Mishima Yukio's Short Stories), Tokyo, Shinchosha, 1964, pp. 843-853.)

45. Tanizaki Junichirō, 谷崎潤一郎, (14.7.1886-30.7.1965)
Novelist, born in a Tokyo merchant class family. During his schooling the family went through many hardships, so the young writer had to do a lot of coaching from early childhood. He was recognised as an outstanding student, particularly for his poetry compositions.

Tanizaki began studying British Law, but transferred to English Literature and eventually took up classical Japanese Literature at Tokyo Imperial University. He had already been active as a writer and had shown strong anti-naturalist sentiments. With a group of friends and Osanai Kaoru, as a central figure, Tanizaki took part in the launching of a literary magazine *Shinshichō*, 新思潮, (New Thought) Many of his earliest stories appeared in this magazine. He was first noted by Nagai Kafū, 永井荷風, who wrote a famous essay about Tanizaki's work. The two writers were soon recognised by the critics as the leaders of the so-called neo-romantic school. Critics divide Tanizaki's literary career into four periods.

Tanizaki's anti-naturalist stand of his 'first period' was marked by an aesthetic pursuit. His professed motto was: "All beautiful things are strong, all ugly things are weak."

In the 'second period' of his work, which began after the publication of an autobiographical story *Chichi to narite*, 父とぼれて, (Having Become a Father,) at the age of thirty one, Tanizaki turned to the problems of disharmony between art and life. The critics called this phase a 'satanic' period of Tanizaki's literature.

While Tanizaki was strongly influenced by Western writers in the first two periods, his 'third period' is marked by a return to Japanese traditional ideals. The first work of this period is *Tade Kuu Mushi*, 噬蜂虫, (Some Prefer Nettles,) published in 1928. At about this time Tanizaki moved from Tokyo to more cultured region of Kyoto. He reached the peak of his literary attainments during this period with his masterly translation into modern Japanese of *The Tale of Genji* and with a lengthy novel *Sasameyuki*, 細雪, (The Makioka Sisters,) written between 1934 and 1938.

Japanese critics delineate the 'fourth period' of Tanizaki's literature in his postwar novels dealing largely with sensual aspects of life and delving into the perverse and the decadent. This is a common feature of Tanizaki's earliest and latest works.

46. Mori Ōgai, 森鴨外, (19.1.1862-9.7.1922.)
Novelist, playwright, critic and army doctor. Mori Ōgai and Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 are considered to be the two pillars of anti-naturalist modern Japanese literature.

In early childhood, Mori acquired considerable learning in Confucianism, Japanese literature and Dutch language. At the age of thirteen he enrolled in the medical faculty of Tokyo Imperial University. During his studies, Mori also pursued his literary interests and wrote translations of the Heian diaries. After graduation, he became a surgeon in the Imperial army and was sent to Germany in 1884 to further his study of medicine. During the four years of his stay in Germany he wrote diaries in Kanbun style and began writing short stories. His experiences in Germany had a great influence on Ōgai's thinking and were reflected in his later work. His wide reading of Western as well as Oriental literature contributed towards developing his great literary gift and his linguistic ability. Thus he was able to produce some of the first significant translations of Western writers like Goethe, Schiller, Ibsen, Andersen and Hauptmann. Ōgai's translations had a great influence on the development of modern drama and modern poetry in Japan.

In creative literature Ōgai occupies an important place as a pioneer of Western type short story. Also, he helped to establish the first systematic literary criticism, by engaging in controversies with Tsubouchi Shōyō 鳥居官守 and other leading Meiji literary figures. Many of his early works were of autobiographical nature, but in his later years Ōgai concentrated mainly on historical novels and biographies. He never became a popular writer because of his scholarly and highly intellectual style of writing, but he was generally esteemed as the leader of the Meiji and Taisho world of letters.


47. For example, Etsuko, 恵子, the heroine of Ai no Kawaki, 愛の渴き, The Thirst of Love, narrates:
"The war began when we were in primary school. Since we thought that newspapers published nothing but articles about the war, one morning when I went to school and heard everyone shouting ABE NO OSADA, ABE NO OSADA, I had no idea what it meant. Soon after entering the middle school, our military exercises doubled. Before long, it reached the point where we could not enter the school gates without wearing putties."
or, Ai no Kawaki, Tokyo, Shinchobunko, 1956.


49. Watakushi no Henreki Jidai, 私の道歴時代, (My Wandering Age,) Tokyo, Kodansha, 1964, p. 19.

50. Ibid., pp. 19-20.

51. Nakamura Mitsuo, 中村光夫, (5.2.1911 - ), A critic, playwright and novelist, born in Tokyo. Professor of literature at Meiji University and lecturer at Tokyo Imperial University. Professor at the Japanese-French Institute. Graduate from the French Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University (1935) and a scholar of French Literature. Winner of the Bungakukai literary prize in 1921. Member of the Japanese Artists Association and J.P.C. Translator from French and author of many works: Sakka-Ron, 作家論, (An Essay on Writers); Furoberu to Mopasan, フローベルとモパッサン; Kindai no Giwaku, 近代の疑感, (Modern Dilemma); Nijū-seiki-no Shōsetsu, 二十世紀の小説, (Twentieth Century Novel); Fuzoku Shōsetsu-Ron, 風俗小説論, (Essay on Genre Novels); Essays on Futabatei Shimei, 二葉亭四迷伝, Tanizaki Junichiro, 谷崎潤一郎 and Shiga Naoya, 志賀直哉; Nihon Kindai Shōsetsu, 日本近代小説, (Modern Novel of Japan); Bungaku no Arikata, (The Way of Literature); Sozōryoku ni Tsuite, 想像力について, (About the Power of Imagination); Hihyō to Sosaku, 批評と創作, (Criticism and Creative Work).
(See the L.M.J.L. Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 822-823).

51a. The quote is from an essay by Nakamura Mitsuo, entitled: Mishima Yukio - Hito to Bungaku, 三島由紀夫人と文学 (Mishima Yukio Personality and Literature), included in Vol. 58, Gendai Bungaku Taikei, 現代文学体系, Tokyo, Chikuma Shobo, 1960.

52. Watakushi no Henreki Jidai, (My Wandering Age,) Tokyo, Kodansha, 1964, p. 18.

53. Usui Yoshimi, 羽井吉見, (17.6.1965 - ) Literary critic, born in Nagano 長野 prefecture. Graduated from Japanese Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University. Member of the Association of Japanese Literature, Association of Comparative Literature and J.P.C.
Main works: *Kindai Bungaku Ronso*, (Controversy of Modern Literature); *Ningen to Bungaku*, (People and Literature); *Taisho Bungaku Shi*, (History of Taisho Literature); *Gendai Meisaku Sen*, (Selection of Famous Modern Works).
(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 121.)


55. *Ooka Shohsei*, (6.3.1909 - )
A novelist, born in a Tokyo middle class family. In his later 'I-novels' Ooka describes his parents' petty-bourgeois type of existence.

He went to a missionary school and received a strong Christian influence. During his school days, Ooka was a great admirer of Akutagawa Ryunosuke and Natsume Soseki. Also, he became interested in French literature, particularly Baudelaire, Valéry, Gide, Proust, etc. Eventually, he entered the French Literature Department of Kyoto university in 1929 and graduated in 1933.

Ooka began his literary career as a critic and essayest on French writers. He made his name as a translator from French. Towards the end of 1930ies he began publishing original works also. However, during the war he was taken prisoner by the American army. He wrote a story about his experiences as a prisoner, entitled *Furyoki*, (Record of a Prisoner,) which won the Yokomitsu Prize in 1948. The success of this novel established Ooka as a novelist. Together with Mishima Yukio, he was soon acclaimed as one of the most promising postwar writers. Since then he has developed as an author of psychological novels in the style of modern French writers and as a prominent critic.
(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 148-152.)


*Yogen to Kaisō 預言と回想 (Prophecies and Reminiscences)*  
*Kamo Chomei 鴨長明*  and *Motoori Norinaga (See L.M.J.L. p.887)*

**b) Kuriyama Riichi 窪山理一 (14.1.1909 - )**  
Main works: *Furyu-ron 風流論 (An Essay on Refinement);*  
*Kindai Haiku 近代俳句 (Modern Haiku)*;  
*Haiku Hihan 俳句批判 (Criticism of Haiku).*  
(See L.M.J.L. p. 373)

(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 1001; also, My Wandering Age, Kodansha, Tokyo, 1964, pp. 10-12.)

A literary critic, born in Nara prefecture. Graduated from the Aesthetics Department of Tokyo Imperial University in 1934. Together with his ex-school-friends, he started a magazine *Cogito*, in the same year. Since then, Yasuda has helped launch many magazines with fellow critics and written numerous articles on Japanese classic, nationalist sentiments, etc. At the basis of his thought, there is a blend of Japanese lyricism, German romanticism and Heroism and a fervent nationalist pride. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 1157.)
60. Hayashi Fusao, 林房雄, (30.5.1903 - ).
A novelist, born in a provincial family conducting a small goods' store and an inn. His childhood years was a time of great hardships and a dire poverty for the family; he had to sell straw sandals made by his father and did a lot of coaching of rich school children.

Hayashi became interested in literature from middle school days and began composing poetry and novels while still at school. He was attracted to Marxism and entered the Political Science Department of Tokyo Imperial University.

During his early period Hayashi was associated with the proletarian literature, but later turned to romanticism and became an outspoken nationalist. In his essays *Bungakusha to Aikoku-shin* (Men of Letters and Patriotic Sentiments), and *Ni-Ni-jū-roku jikan ni tai-suru Kansō* ( Thoughts on the Incident of the 26th February), Hayashi Fusao expounded his ideas of extreme nationalism and Emperor worship. In his representative work *Seinen* (Young Men), a historical novel describing the ideals and dilemmas of the young men in the Meiji Restoration like Ito Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru, Hayashi developed his nationalistic ideals by portraying the mentality of Japanese nationalism. (See the *L.M.J.L.*, Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 898 - 902.


62. Okuno Takeo, 奥野健男 (25.7.1926 - )
A critic, born in Tokyo. Graduated from the Chemistry Department of the Tokyo College of Technology in 1952. Member of the Modern Critics' Association, New Japan's Literary Society and Japanese Culture Institute. He belongs to a generation which lived under the influence of Dazai Osamu 大塞三. His main works are: *Dazai Osamu - Ron* (Essay on Dazai Osamu), and *Gendai Sakka-Ron* (Discussion of Modern Writers). (See the *L.M.J.L.*, Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 188-189.)


64. Ibid., pp. 142-143.

66. Ibid., p. 17.


68. Jinzai Kiyoshi, 神西清, (15.11.1903 - 11.3.1957.)
A novelist, critic, translator and scholar of Russian literature, born in Tokyo. Graduated from the Russian Language Department of the Tokyo Foreign Language centre in 1928. Winner of the Iketani Prize in 1936 and the Education Minister's Award in 1952. Lectured at the Meiji University and Kamakura Academy. Translated Balzac, Turgenyev, Gide, Gorkii, Block, Lyermontov, Chehov, Affanassiev, Pushkin, Dostoyevskii, etc.

Representative works: Sui-mizu, (Falling Water), (1942); Hai-iro no Me no Onna, (A Woman With Ashen Colour) (1946) and Shonen, (Youth), (1951).
His Collection of Short Stories is also well known.
(See the L.M.J. L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 567-568.)

69. Akutagawa Ryunosuke, 青山龍之介, (1.3.1892 - 24.7.1927)
A novelist, born in Tokyo. Brought up in an environment conducive to acquiring a wide literary erudition. Surrounded by men of literary taste, he became versed in Japanese and Chinese poetry from a very early stage. His mother became insane when he was only a small child, and this caused a severe disturbance in the make up of the young writer.

Akutagawa's precocious talent for literature was noticed from primary school, when he wrote remarkable haiku. He was an extremely sensitive boy, but distinguished as an excellent student and a copious reader of Chinese and Japanese as well as Western literature.

After graduation from high school, he enrolled in the English Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University and collaborated with his friends like Kikuchi Kan, and Kume Masao, in producing a literary magazine. He was soon introduced to Natsume Sōseki and became the latter's devout disciple. His first stories like Hana, (Flower) and Rashomon, (The Gate), based on Konjaku Monogatari, (Stories, Ancient and Modern), were highly praised by Natsume Sōseki, and the young writer was soon acclaimed in literary circles for the exceptional power of his narrative and the striking originality of his style.

Akutagawa graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1917. Changing several posts, he became increasingly devoted to his vocation as a writer. He was opposed to the realism of the Naturalist school of writers and strove to create a new literary
tradition of pure aestheticism along the lines of extreme 'art for art's sake' philosophy.

Throughout his life Akutagawa suffered from severe nervous tension and physical disability. He attempted suicide on several occasions and finally succeeded in 1927 by carefully administering an overdose of veronal.

Together with the writers of the Shirakaba (White Birch) movement, Akutagawa may be considered as a writer who was largely responsible for the development of the townsfolk literature in the Taishō era. His life, including his death, symbolizes the maturing, fluctuations and break up of the ideals of townsfolk literature.

Apart from short stories, Akutagawa wrote outstanding fairy tales, essays and critical articles. His unique qualities are distinguished by two main factors: his subject matter and his style.

In contrast to the naturalist writers' tendency to write solely about their personal experiences, Akutagawa relied largely on his great erudition for a diversity of material and subject matter. In style, Akutagawa shows a perfectionist concern for the choice of words and construction. He developed a highly sophisticated and refined style, distinguished both by its economy and rich colouring. (See L.M.J.L., pp.13-16.)

70. Yamato: The first central state established in Kyūshū by certain clans which had gained supremacy over their neighbours and formed a nucleus of power in the province of Yamato. The official records of Kojiki (Record of Ancient Things) and the Nihon-Shoki (Chronicles of Japan) were compiled in 712 and 720 to strengthen the dynastic claims of the Yamato sovereigns. The people of Yamato are considered to be the ancient stock of the Japanese people, representing the core of the national heritage. Scholars distinguish the pure 'Yamato words' in the Japanese language and the 'Yamato-e' or 'Yamato-paintings' of the pure Japanese style as opposed to paintings influenced by the Chinese art.

71. Shiga Naoya, (20.2.1883 - )
Novelist. Born in a Tokyo family of samurai stock. As an aristocratic child, Shiga went to the Peer's School. His family moved to his grand-parents' household and Shiga was brought up mainly by his grandparents. He later mentioned that his grandfather was one of the three people who had the greatest influence on him.

At the age of eighteen Shiga met Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 and for seven years remained his disciple imbibing Christian teaching. This was another significant influence in his life. It was about this time, when he had advanced to high school and began to associate with Mushakoji Saneatsu, that he became interested in literature and produced his first short
stories. After graduating from the Peer's School, he enrolled in the Department of English Literature of Tokyo Imperial University. Shiga Naoya, Mushakōji Saneatsu and two other high school friends started a literary magazine and Shiga published several short stories in the next few years. He transferred from the English Department to Japanese Literature, but finally abandoned scholarship to devote himself entirely to writing.

After starting several magazines, Shiga and his group founded the Shirakaba 白樺 (White Birch) magazine in 1910, which became the nucleus of the anti-naturalist literary movement. The Shirakaba group of writers were often called humanists and idealists.

Shiga wrote mainly short stories over his long span of life. His writing was interspersed with several periods of silence and his output is relatively small. The only novel he produced is Anya Koro, 暗夜行路 (A Dark Night's Journey), written in two parts between the years 1921 and 1937. The novel is strongly autobiographical, like most of Shiga's works.

The life and work of Shiga Naoya is of epoch-making significance in Japanese literature. He is one of the few modern writers who succeeded in creating a unique style of writing out of the complexity of the changing modern language. His style is terse and deceptively simple, a writing known for its exceptional beauty, which won him a unique place in modern Japanese literature. Critics often refer to the so-called "Shiga's style" in discussing modern literature. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 485-489. Also, Modern Japanese Stories - An Anthology, edited by Ivan Morris, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962, pp. 81-83.)

72. Kasai Zenzō,  JULI  23.7.1928
Novelist, born in Aomori prefecture. From childhood he was very fond of Bakin. For a while he was a newspaper boy in Tokyo and went to a night school, but he returned home because of his mother's illness. When she had passed away, Kasai took up a post at Hokkaido. Later he went back to Tokyo and began studies at the Toyo University, only to abandon them again.

After getting married in 1908, Kasai became a disciple of Tokuda Shusei 徳田秋声 and devoted himself to the vocation of a novelist.

Despite the vicissitudes of a life of poverty and sickness, Kasai continued to produce novels and short stories, throughout his life. He preserved a traditional outlook, although writing in the train of the Naturalist school of writers.
Kasai's virgin work _Kanashiki Chichi_ (Sad Father) was published in the first year of the Taisho era (1912). From that time he continued publishing novels in succession and became a correspondent of Orinomo Times in 1915. Back in Tokyo, he published _Nisemono_ (Fake) in the Waseda Bungaku magazine. In the same year, 1913, he wrote _Ane_ (Elder Sister), _Yukionna_ (The Snow Woman), etc. and established his reputation in the literary circles. Many of his other representative works, like _Ko o Taurete_ (Taking Along a Child), were also published in the Waseda Bungaku magazine. Thus Kasai was called the "Waseda Shiga" in comparison to Shiga Naoya of the Shirakaba school.

(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 229-232.)


74. _Hanazakari no Mori_, (The Forest in Full Bloom), _Mishima Yukio Tampen Zenshu_, (Complete Collection of Mishima Yukio's Short Stories), Tokyo, Shinchosha, 1964, p. 12.

75. _Kindai Bungaku_,  近代文学: A monthly literary magazine, published from January, 1946 to August, 1964. Founded in autumn 1945 by a group of seven leftist writers and critics: Honda Shūgo, Hirano Ken, Ōzawa Masayuki, Yamamura Shizuka, Haniya Yutaka, Arai Masahito, and Odagiri Hideo. The group was inspired by Marxist ideas and advocated a stand of humanism and political insight in literature as opposed to the ideas of Nakano Shigeharu, who led the so-called 'Democratic literature' movement. The arguments between the two groups developed into a famous controversy of "Politics and Literature" marking the first significant wave of literary activity in postwar Japan.

Kindai Bungaku group later split and became enlarged, first by eight new names, including some of the writers of the war-time Matinèe Poétique group like Kato Shūichi, Nakamura Shin'ichirō, Nakamura Shin'ichirō, Nakamura Shin'ichirō, and Fukunaga Takehi. Eighteen new names were later added to the group. From 1959 a Kindai Bungaku Prize was established. Many significant works were produced during the eight years of the magazine's existence. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 341-342.)

77. KOKINSHŪ, 古今集: (Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems.)
The first of the anthologies of Japanese poetry compiled by
the Imperial order. It was completed in 905 and contains 1,111
poems, almost all of them WAKA and many of the best poems
anonymous.

78. Nakamura Mitsuo: Mishima Yukio - Hito to Bungaku, (Mishima
Yukio - Personality and Literature), Gendai Bungaku Taikei,
Vol. 58, Tokyo, Chikuma Shobo, 1960.

79. Quoted by Jinzai Kiyoshi: The Fate of Narcissism - Essay on
Mishima Yukio. Bungakukai, March, 1952, p. 131. (See note 73.)

80. Ibid., p. 132.

81. Ibid., p. 130.

82. Nakamura Mitsuo: Mishima Yukio - Personality and Literature
(See note 78.)

83. Kawabata Yasunari, 川瀬康成, (11.6.1899 - )
A novelist, born in Osaka. Kawabata lost both parents in
early childhood and was brought up by his grandparents.
However, his grandmother died when he was eight and his
grandfather died when he was sixteen, so he was eventually
taken into his mother's family. The sad circumstances of
his childhood are described in Kawabata's virgin work Diary
of a Sixteen Year Old.

Stimulated by his friends at school, Kawabata began
publishing short stories at a very early age in the Ningen
(see note 1.) and Danraku magazines.

Kawabata entered the English Literature Department of
Tokyo Imperial University in 1910 but changed to the Japanese
Literature Department in the following year, when he started
the publication of a literary magazine Shinshichō 新思潮
in collaboration with his student friends. His story
Shokonsai Hitokei 招魂祭一景 (A Scene from the Memorial
Service for the War Dead) received a favourable criticism by
Kikuchi Kan, 菊池寛, Kume Masao, 久米正雄 and Sasaki
Mosaku 佐佐木茂雄. Kikuchi Kan took a personal interest
in Kawabata, helped him establish his name and introduced
him to Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一. The two writers started
a new literary movement called Shin-kankakuhō 新感派
The New Perceptionist School.

Kawabata is a writer deeply versed in both the Japanese
and Western cultures. Of the Japanese classics he is known
to have been attracted most to Genji Monogatari, 源氏物語,
(The Tale of Genji), Makura Soshi, 祝詞子, (The Pillow Book),
Tsurezure-Gusa, (Gleanings from my Leisure Hours),
Okagami, (The Great Mirror), Chikamatsu 近松
and Saikaku 西鶴. Of Western writers he widely read
Dostoevskii, Chehov, Strindberg, Joyce, etc. Of the writers
active in his time, he was most influenced by Shiga Naoya and
Tokuda Shusei.

In his works, Kawabata pays greater attention to the
feelings and atmosphere behind events than to the events
described. He is distinguished for the lyrical beauty and
a sensitive insight of his descriptive passages.

The most famous of his works are Izu no Odoriko, (The Izu Dancer),
Asakusa Kureidan, (The Kureidan of Asakusa), Yukiguni, (The Snow Country),
Senbazuru, (Thousand Cranes), and Yama no Oto, (The Sound of the Mountain).

Kawabata is also an important literary critic. He devotes
much attention to young writers. Mishima Yukio is one of his
protegés. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965.
pp. 279-284.
Also, Modern Japanese Stories - An Anthology, edited by Ivan
Morris, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962.)

84. Shin Kankaku-ha, 新感覚派 : The Neo-Perceptionist School,
also called by the Japanese a 'neo-sensual' school. The
origins of the school may be traced back to October, 1924
when Chiba Kameo 千葉雄 also published an essay "The Birth of the
Neo-Sensualist School" in connection with the activities of
the Bungei Jidai 文芸時代 magazine. The Neo-Sensualists
revolted both against the realistic sketching technique of the
naturalist school and the dogmatism of the proletarian writers.
Their style and ideas were derived on the one hand from
Japanese haiku poetry and on the other hand from a number of
European influences like Dadaism, futurism, expressionism, etc.
The following are the main precepts of their writing:

1) To extend the freshness and intuitive liveliness of the
vocabulary even to the making of a plot and to develop
extraordinarily sensitive organic responsiveness refined
to the point of intuitive perception.

2) To express actuality by symbols and subtle suggestive
hints relying on impulsive perceptions, thereby
drawing on the art of revealing the inner life of
things and the deeper significance of ordinary
phenomena.

3) To experience a sensual perception of new vocabulary,
poetry and rhythm with the sureness of artistic
intuition.

4) To have sensual perception sensitive to the point of
abnormality and decadence but counterbalanced by
intellectual elements.
Paul Morand’s *Ouvert la Nuit* was a direct model of the Japanese New Sensualists. (N.B. in comparison, it seems that the Japanese writing is not at all inferior.)

However, there is a danger that the New Sensualists’ style of writing becomes devoid of life qualities and ends up by being a mere *ism.*

(See L.M.J.L. pp. 561-562.)

85. See Mishima’s postscript in the first volume of *Mishima Yukio Sakuhin Shū* (Collected Works of Mishima Yukio), Shinchosha, Tokyo, 1962.

“...From a childish dream I wanted to strive and emulate Radiguet. I went by age. I thought I would pit myself against him at the same age, coping with the work of the same magnitude and the same quality. The pitiful result is now in front of me. As I read it over, I am not in the slightest ashamed of my childishness at the time.”

The same passage is quoted by Takeda Taijun 坂本泰淳 in the commentary to the Shincho Bunko 新潮文庫 copy of the novel, published in Tokyo, 1961, (*See Kaisetsu* 解説 p. 178;)


89. Nakamura Mitsuo: Mishima Yukio - Personality and Literature, (See note 78).


91. (For Mori Ōgai see note 46.) Mori Ōgai's novel Vita Sexualis is a sort of sexual autobiography, published in 1909, at the height of the naturalist movement. Mori seems to have written this work as a deliberate attack on the naturalist writers, who tended to overemphasise the sensual aspect of human life. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 1141. Also, Modern Japanese Stories - An Anthology, edited by Ivan Morris, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962, p. 36.)

92. Anya Koro, 暗夜行路, A Dark Night's Journey: the only long novel by Shiga Naoya, published serially in the Kaizo magazine from January, 1921 till April, 1937. The completed work was first published in the Kaizo edition of Complete Works of Shiga Naoya (a total of nine volumes) and then in the Iwanami Bunko edition in two volumes. The gist of the story is: the hero Kensaku, 謙作, is born to his mother and grandfather during his father's trip abroad. Because
of this, he goes through endless suffering and when he eventually marries, his wife commits adultery with an elder cousin while he is away on a trip. Kensaku experiences terrible torment and suffering over this, but eventually he is able to attain serenity and peace of mind, generously forgiving his wife everything. She, in turn, becomes determined to follow him to the end. The attitude of the hero Kensaku towards his life crisis and the accurate description of his inner quest for harmony deserve particular attention. In this work, Shiga Naoya realised most fully what was described by the Shirakaba school of writers as "reverence for true feelings". A Dark Night's Journey is considered by many critics to be the great masterpiece of modern Japanese literature. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 448. Also, Modern Japanese Stories - An Anthology, edited by Ivan Morris, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962, p. 82.)

93. Quoted by Nakamura Mitsuo in his essay: Mishima Yukio - Personality and Literature. (See note 78.)

94. Quoted by Nakamura Mitsuo, Ibid.

95. Quoted from an American translation, which I was unable to locate. (See Confessions of A Mask by Yukio Mishima, translated by Meredith Weatherby, New Directions, New York, 1958)

The first British translation by Constance Garnett varies slightly:

"Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! It is terrible because it has not been fathomed and never can be fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side.

......
The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man. But a man always talks of his own ache. Listen, now to come to facts."

(See The Brothers Karamazov, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1949, pp. 106-107)

This translation is more literal. For comparison, see Bratia Karamazovy, Tom I, Paris, YMCA Press, 1946, p. 143.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Fukuda Tsuneari, 福田恒夫 (25.8.1912 - )
Critic and playwright, born in Tokyo. Graduated from the English Department of Tokyo Imperial University in 1936. After graduation, he became a lecturer at Nichidai and Sophia Universities and a member of the Pacific Ocean Association and the American Studies Institute Research team.

Fukuda won recognition as the author of essays on Yokomitsu Riichi and Akutagawa Ryunosuke, published in the magazine Sakka Seishin 作家精神 (Writers' Spirit.) He is an advocate of liberalism and was opposed to the left-wing sympathisers in the controversy of "Politics and Literature".

Fukuda was awarded the Yomiuri Literary Award for the satirical comedy Nyo o Nadeta Otoko 獣を撫でた男 (The Man Who Patted a Dragon). At the invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation he studied abroad in Europe and the U.S. Upon return, he tried his hand at writing radio dramas and verse dramas.

Stimulated by seeing Shakespeare's plays in London, he translated the complete works of Shakespeare. For the success of these translations he was awarded the Kishida Drama Award in 1955. In the following year, he received the Ministry of Education Award for the production of Hamlet.

In 1963 he founded and became the chairman of the Association of Modern Drama and became extremely active in the field of drama with the affiliated theatrical group Kumo 雲, The Cloud.

Main works: Sakka no Taido, 作家の態度, (Writer's Attitude), 1947; Kindai no Shukumon, 現代の宿命, (Modern Destiny), 1947; Seio Sakka-Ron, 西欧作家論, (Essays on Western European Writers), 1949; Geijutsu to wa Nani ka, 芸術とは何か, (What is Art?) (1950); Heiwa-ron ni Taisuru Gimon, 平和論における疑問, (The Question of Peace Arguments), 1955; Ningen Geki-teki Naru Mono, 人間, 剧的力者, (People, the Dramatic), 1956; Watakushi-no Engeki Hakusho, 私の演劇自著, (My Theatrical White Book), 1957; Watakushi-no Kokugo Kyoshitsu, 私の国語教室, (My National Language Classroom), 1958; Complete Works by Fukuda Tsuneari - 18 volumes.

(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 963-964.)

100. Fukuda Tsuneari: Commentary, Kamen no Kokuhaku, Tokyo, Shinchosha, 1957, pp. 205-212, by Fukuda Tsuneari, (see p. 205.)
101. "I-Novel": A type of autobiographical fiction occupying a disproportionately large place in modern Japanese literature. The term was introduced by Mori Ōgai, who adopted the German concept of 'Ich Roman' when referring to his first piece of fiction The Dancing Girl, which was closely based on his personal experiences. This type of 'confessional' faithful portrayal of personal experiences was enthusiastically developed by the naturalist writers after the Russo-Japanese war. The popularity of the 'I novel' was further enhanced by Shiga Naoya's success with this genre. Many Japanese writers came to indulge in realistic descriptions of petty details from their own lives; their dramatised 'personal diaries' were often tinged with an undertone of self-pity. A later development of the 'I novel' was the Shinkyo-Shosetsu 心境小説 or the psychological novel. (For comparison see the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 496-498; also p. 366.)


103. Quoted by Isoda Koichi 磯田光一 in an essay about Ao no Jidai, 青の時代, (Green Age), entitled Junkyō no Bijaku, 殉教の美学, (The Aesthetics of Martyrdom), Bungakukai, March, 1964.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.


(For comparison with the existing translation, see The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, translated by Ivan Morris, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1963, p. 144.)

107. Ibid., p. 270 or p. 262.
CHAPTER III

108. Ama-no Iwato, 天岩戸: One of the legendary deities described in Kojiki, 古事記 (Stories of Ancient Things).


110. Ibid., p. 45.

111. Mentioned in My Wandering Age, Ibid., pp. 18-19.

112. Izumi Shikibu Nikki, 和泉式部日記, (The Diary of Izumi Shikibu). One of the four famous diaries of the Heian period, written by ladies of a lower rank of nobility. These diaries, Kagero Nikki, 蛍蛇日記, Sarashina Nikki, 杉田日記, Izumi Shikibu Nikki, 和泉式部日記 and Murasaki Shikibu Nikki, 紫式部, give a fairly realistic picture of the life of court ladies at the time.

113. See Chapter IV. p. 92.


116. Ibid., p. 348.

117. Ibid., p. 350.

118. Ibid., p. 350.

120. Yamamoto Kenkichi, 山本健吉, (26.4.1907 - ), Literary critic and haiku specialist, born in Nagasaki. Graduated from Japanese Literature Department of Keio University in 1934. Winner of the Shinchō Prize, 1955, and Yomiuri Prize, 1956. Member of the Mita Bungaku Society, Haibun Society and Japanese Artists' Association. Main works: Shi-Shosetsu Sakka-Ron, 小説作家論 (Discussion of the 'I-novel' Writers); Koten to Gendai Bungaku, 古典と現代文学, (Classics and Modern Literature); Haiku no Sekai, (The World of Haiku); Gendai Haiku, 現代俳句, (Modern Haiku); Bashō, Bashō etc.


123. Ibid., p. 185.

124. Ibid., p. 172.


126. Ibid., p. 710.

127. Mishima Yukio: Bara to Kaizoku, (The Rose and the Pirate), Ibid., 470.

128. Ibid., 416.

129. Muramatsu Takeshi, 村松則, (23.3.1929 - )
A literary critic, born in Tokyo. Graduated from French Literature Department of St. Paul's University.
Representative works: Yudaviajin, エダヤ人, (Jewish People), Bungaku to Shi Seishin, 文学と詩精神, (Literature and Poetic Spirit). (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 1131).


131. Ibid., p. 271.

132. Ibid., p. 271.

133. Ibid., p. 272.


137. Ibid., p. 269.


139. Ibid., p. 540.

140. Ibid., p. 541.

141. Ibid., p. 557.

142. Ibid., p. 558.

143. Ibid., p. 579.

A playwright, born in Fukuoka, 福岡, prefecture. Graduated from English Literature Department of Keio University in 1942. Kato became interested in theatre from student days and took part in organising the Shin Engeki Kenkyu-kai, 新演劇研究会, The New Theatre Study Group. He began writing and translating plays from about that time also. As a postgraduate student he studied English Drama, mainly Shakespeare and Ben Johnson; he was also an admirer of Jean Giraudoux. Kato began writing Nayotake なりおtake 1943, but the war interrupted him for a while and he completed it later. Nayotake was circulated among the intelligentsia, published in the Mita Bungaku magazine and created a sensation in 1946, prior to Kato's return from his war-time and postwar assignments. After the success of Nayotake, he showed remarkable activity as a playwright, producer, translator and critic. Much was expected of him as an avant-garde playwright, but he committed suicide at his home due to a severe nervous depression.

Nayotake is a play in five acts, published serially in the Mita Bungaku magazine. It won the Minakami Takitaro Award in 1948 and the Mainichi Drama Award in 1951. It is a superb poetic drama, in which Kato ingeniously makes the best use of a Japanese classic (Taketori Monogatari) and mixes reality with dreams. Nayotake is one of the masterpieces in the history of Showa drama, said to have been inspired by Giraudoux's Ondine. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 245-246.)

A novelist, born in Tokyo. From about 1921, when he entered a high school in Tokyo, Hori became acquainted with Jinzai Kiyoshi and Kobayashi Hideo 小林秀雄 and began reading French symbolic poets. He was also keen on the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Later, he took up Japanese literature at Tokyo Imperial University and was greatly influenced by
Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. His graduation thesis was on Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, in which Hori analysed with penetrating insight the reasons for Akutagawa's suicide. Soon after graduation Hori began publishing original works. His virgin work that won recognition in the literary circles is **Bukiyō-no Tenshi**, (A Clumsy Angel).

Together with Kawabata Yasunari and other writers, Hori took part in launching the **Bungaku** magazine in 1928. This marks the beginning of his intensive literary activity. He became very active as a translator from French also. Proust, Rilke, Raymond Radiguet and Francois Mauriac are some of the writers that influenced him. For example, one of his representative works, **Nahoko**, (1941), was written under the influence of Mauriac.

On the other hand, Hori attempted borrowing from Japanese classics too. Of the Heian diaries he adapted **Kagerō Nikki**, 蝶蝶日記, in his work **Kagerō-no Nikki**, (Kagerō's Diary), concentrating on the psychology of the heroine. He borrowed from many other classics, like **Ise Monogatari**, 伊勢物語, (The Tale of Ise), etc. Thus Hori had relied on both European literature and Japanese classics in developing the unique world of his novels, which are highly intellectual while pervaded with a lyrical atmosphere.

The main themes of Hori's novels are 'death', 'life', and 'love'. Hori's literature fulfilled the function of co-ordinating various literary trends in the Shōwa era, for he succeeded in creating a blend of the intellectual and the lyrical, while preserving consistent themes and developing a unique style.

(See the **L.M.J.L.**, Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 1021-1027.)
CHAPTER IV

146. Quoted by Yoshida Seiichi from Mishima's "Retrospect Notes on Sotoba Komachi": Mishima Yukio to Chusei Nogaku, (Mishima Yukio and the Nô Plays of the Middle Ages), Gendai Bungaku to Koten, Tokyo, Shibundô, 1963, p. 222.

147. a) Peri Noël: Cinquie Pièces de No: Interprétation, Notices et traductions avec transcription et notes. (Etudes sur le Drame lyrique japonais No); BEEFEO-X, 1911, i-ii, pp. 111-151.


149. W.B. Yeats: Two Plays for Dancers, the Cuala Press, 1910.
   Contains: The Dreaming of the Bones; The Only Jealousy of Emer.

   W.B. Yeats: Four Plays for Dancers, MacMillan, 1921.
   Contains: At the Hawk's Well; The Only Jealousy of Emer,
   The Dreaming of the Bones, Calvary. Note on each play,
   music for At the Hawk's Well and The Dreaming of the Bones.

   N.B. In 1914 Responsibility was published and Yeats started
   working on the Nô plays, perhaps drawing from Pound the stimulus
   that he had previously found in Synge. (See T.H. Henn:
   The Lonely Tower, London, Methuen, 1950, p. 31.)

150. W.B. Yeats: Four Plays for Dancers, London, MacMillan, 1921,
   p. 86. (from "Note on the First Performance of At the Hawk's
   Well")

151. Ōshima Shōtarō, 大島正太郎: W.B. YEATS AND JAPAN - In His
   Relation With the Zen Philosophy and the "Nô". Waseda
   University, Tokyo, March, 1964, pp. 7-17.

152. Ibid., p. 7.

153. Kōri Torahiko, 郷尾薫, (28.6.1890 - 6.10.1924)
   A playwright, born in Tokyo. Participated in the Shirakaba
   literary movement.
   In 1912 Kōri published Kiyohime 清姫, The Princess
   Kiyo in the Mita Bungaku magazine. The play was introduced
   on stage by Ichikawa Sadanji II, 二世市川左団次, in his
   Jiyū Gekijō 自由劇場, Free Theatre. Dōjōji was later
   performed at the Haiyuza 俳優座, Actors' Theatre.
With his adaptations of the No plays, Kōri attempted to portray a woman's heart by borrowing the script of the No plays and modifying it as a foreigner would do. His experiment did not receive favourable criticism. Later, he went to England, translated his plays into English and created a name for himself in Europe before becoming recognised in Japan. He died in Switzerland of lung illness. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 405.)


155. Ibid., pp. 222-223.


157. Quoted by Makoto Ueda from Nietzsche's ethics, ibid.


159. Quoted by Yamamoto Kenkichi, *About Mishima Yukio - Solid Time* (See note 121.)

160. Ibid.

161. Quoted by Makoto Ueda from *Chinese Characters - Instigations*. (See note 156.)

162. Ibid.

163. Ibid.

164. Takechi Tetsuji, 武智鉄二, (10.12.1912 - )
A playwright, drama critic and producer, born in Osaka. Graduated from the Economics Department of Kyoto University. In the same year, 1939, he started his own magazine Gekihyo, (Drama Criticism) winning recognition as an outstanding critic of Kabuki and Bunraku. Later he received the Mainichi Music Award for his production of Kinoshita Junji's *Yuzuru 9 鶴*, Evening Crane; he was also awarded the Osaka Civic Prize. Ever since, he has been active as a producer of the No plays, dance dramas and films. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 663-664.)

The reference on poetic devices:
KAKEKOTOTA, 掛詞 : a pivot-word used for a subtle play on words, where two meanings of a word pronounced in the same way are combined in overlapping phrases.
ENGO, 締語 : related words - used to suggest or pick up echoes of meaning in a poem.
JOSHI, 序詞 : preface words - used as hints of the important meaning in a poem.

These poetic devices and refinements were extremely popular in poetry since the Heian era and were used extensively in the ノ plays.

166. Ibid.
167. Yamamoto Kenkichi: About Mishima Yukio - Solid Time (See note 121.)
170. Yamamoto Kenkichi: About Mishima Yukio - Solid Time. (See note 121.)
171. Yashiro Seiichi, 矢代静一, (10.4.1927 - )
174. Ōshima Shōtarō: W. B. YEATS AND JAPAN, p. 10. (see note 150)
175. Quoted by Yashiro Seiichi, (see note 172) p. 254.
176. Yoshida Seiichi: Mishima Yukio and the No Plays of the Middle Ages, (see note 146.) p. 229.
177. Quoted by Yoshida Seiichi, Ibid., p. 230.

178. Ibid.


180. Ibid., p. 986.


182. Quoted by Yoshida Seiichi, (see note 146.) p. 221.

183. Ibid., p. 233.


185. Ibid., 906.

186. Ibid., *Sotoba Komachi*, p. 942.

187. Ibid., *Aoi no Ue*, pp. 955 - 956.

188. Ibid., *Hanjo*, p. 975.

189. Ibid., *Yoroboshi*, p. 1017.

190. Ibid., p. 1015.


192. Ibid.


194. Ibid., p. 918.


197. Quoted by Yashiro Seiichi, (see notes 171 & 172) Commentary, p. 254.


200. Ibid., pp. 928-930.

201. Ibid., p. 929.


203. Ibid.

204. Yoshida Seiichi: *Mishima Yukio and the No Plays of the Middle Ages*, (see note 146.) p. 225.

205. Quoted by Yoshida Seiichi, ibid, p. 229.


207. Ibid., p. 960.

208. Ibid., p. 961.

209. Ibid., p. 963.


215. Toida Michizō: *Mishima Yukio and the No*. (See note 173.)


219. Isoda Köichi: (10.4.1929 - )
A young and rising literary critic. First recognised in 1960 by the literary magazine *Gunzō*. Since then he has been writing critiques for various magazines including *Bungei* and *Bungaku-kai*. Isoda graduated from the English Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University and is now teaching literature at Chūō University. He is also employed in the Tokyo University Institute of English Literature.


222. Itagaki Naoko: (18.11.1896 - )
A literary critic, born in Aomori prefecture. She graduated from the English Literature Department of Sophia University. After graduation, Itagaki attended lectures in aesthetics and philosophy at Tokyo University and became a lecturer at Chiba University. She is now a prominent literary figure with a number of original works, translations and essays to her credit. Her representative works are: *Fujin Sakka Hyoden* 婦人作象評伝 (Critical Biographies of Women Writers); and a magazine of haiku entitled *Itadori* いだとり (*The Giant Knotweed*). (See the L.M.J.L. Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 80.)


226. Nakano Yoshio 中野好夫: (2.8.1903 - )
A critic and scholar of English literature. He graduated from the English Literature Department of Tokyo University.

Since the war Nakano has been active as a literary and social critic. In 1953 he resigned from his Professorship at Tokyo University to engage in free lance work as a journalist and critic. His wide reading in English and Western European literature has greatly influenced his views. However, Nakano has travelled in the field of criticism a path similar to that of Natsume Sōseki in literature: although first influenced by Western ideas, he later embraced traditional Japanese ideals and became an outspoken advocate of the superiority of the Oriental way of life.

Apart from original works, Nakano has produced translations of Shakespeare, Swift, Mann, etc. (See L.M.J.L. Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 809.)


228. Hino Keizo 日野啓三
(no data about him available.)


230. Uramatsu Samitaro 浦松佐美太郎
(no data about him available.)


237. Shioda Ryōhei 塩田良平 : (25.5.1899 - )
An essayist and a scholar of modern literature, born in Tokyo. He graduated from the Japanese Literature Department of Tokyo University. Prior to becoming a professor at St. Paul's University, he was a lecturer at Meiji and Keiō Universities, and a professor at Komazawa and Taishō Universities. A doctor of literature, Shioda is one of the pioneering scholars of modern Japanese literature especially in the field of factual research in Meiji literature. He is also thoroughly versed in the classics of the Heian period. (See L.M.J.L. Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p. 484.)

238. Yokomitsu Toshikazu 横光利一 : (17.3.1898 - 30.12.1947)
A novelist, normally called Yokomitsu Riichi. His first literary attempt, *Yoru no Tsubasa* 夜の翼 *The Wings of Night*, published in a high school magazine, was already marked by qualities which were to develop into characteristic features of the style advocated by the Neo-Perceptionist School. (See note 84. on Shinkankakuha.)

Yokomitsu enrolled in the Preparatory School of Literature at Waseda University, but he was absent from school for long periods of time because of nervous illness. During his irregular studies he began forming a number of literary magazines in association with his friends. His work soon came to notice of the influential Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛, who introduced Yokomitsu to Kawabata Yasunari. (See note 83.) The New Perceptionist School came into prominence largely through the work of the two writers, whose association developed into a long and fruitful friendship. In 1925 Yokomitsu wrote a famous essay *Shinkankaku-Ron* 新感覚論 (An Essay on the New Perception) which became the bible of the New Perceptionist School. Yokomitsu formed his literary views in ardent opposition to the dogmatism of the proletarian writers and the realism of the Naturalist School of writers.

In later years, partly owing to his association with Hori Tatsuo, (see note 145.), Yokomitsu turned to psychological
exploration favoured by the writers of the New Psychological School who were influenced by Proust and Joyce. The first story Yokomitsu wrote in this train was *Kikai* (Machine) (See *Modern Japanese Stories - An Anthology*, edited by Ivan Morris, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, 1962, pp. 223-245.)

Yokomitsu wrote his second famous essay *Junsui Shōsetsu-Ron*, 純粋小説論 (An Essay on the Pure Novel) in 1935, which was to influence many leading writers of the Showa period. The fame he reached in the literary circles at the time may be gauged from the fact that he was called SHŌSETSU NO KAMISAMA 小説の神様 (A God of the Novel).

In the last phase of his work Yokomitsu turned more and more towards the traditional spiritual values and Zen Buddhism. His basic theme became the search for self-insight in a contradictory world of modern realities. His representative work of this period is the novel *Ryoshu* 旅愁 (*Loneliness Felt on a Journey*).

The circumstances of Yokomitsu Riichi's career and of his literary quest are typical of the intellectual climate of the Showa era. (See L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 1187-1191.)

239. *Yoshida Seiichi and Shioda Ryōhei: Gendai-bun no Kenkyū* 現代文の研究 (A Study of Modern Writing,) Tokyo, Obunsha, 1959, p. 69. (see pp. 68-72.)


242. Among other critics, Takechi Tetšuji, Yashiro Seiichi and Toida Michizō expressed conflicting views on the style of the *Collection of Modern No Plays*. (See Chapter 4. pp. )


245. See Chapter 4. pp. 102-105.
A novelist, poet and critic. In childhood, Noma received a strong influence from his father, who was a devout Buddhist. From the age of ten, when he lost his father, Noma was brought up by his mother. He read widely during his school days and early youth. Thus he absorbed the influences of Balzac, Flaubert, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, Proust and Gide. Finally, Noma came under the influence of Marxism, becoming one of the prominent postwar left-wing writers.

Representative works: Kao no Naka no Akai Tsuki (Red Moon in the Face); Kurai E (Dark Picture); Hokai Kankaku (Sensation of Collapse); Bungaku no Tankyū (The Quest of Literature); Jinsei no Tankyū (The Quest of Human Life); Yuki no Shita no Koe ga (The Voice Under the Snow); Shinkū Chitai (Zone of Emptiness); Saikoro no Sora (A Dice Box of the Sky); and Waga Tō wa Soko ni Tatsu (There Stands my Tower). (See L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 871-874.)

Noma Hiroshi: Mishima Yukio no Tanbi (Mishima Yukio's Aestheticism), Bungaku-kai, February, 1951, p. 130.

Dazai Osamu: (19.6.1909 - 13.6.1948) A novelist born in Aomori as a sixth son of a landowning family. From middle school days Dazai cherished a dream of becoming a writer and began publishing short stories and essays in the Aomori Middle School magazine. By the time he reached high school age the number of his short stories had grown to 200. In 1930 Dazai came up to Tokyo and enrolled at the French Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University. Leading a life of dissipation and bohemianism, Dazai flirted intermittently with romanticism, communism, etc. He was given to drunkenness and drug addiction and made several attempts to commit suicide. Eventually, he succeeded in destroying his life by throwing himself into a river at the outskirts of Tokyo.

Dazai left a number of remarkable works, distinguished by a fine, sensitive prose, profound pessimism and strong undertones of nihilism. His works reflect the postwar climate of spiritual wasteland. In the early postwar years Dazai enjoyed enormous popularity among the so-called "lost generation" of postwar youth.

Representative works: Bannen (Late Years); Dasu Gemaine (Das Gemeine); Hashire Merosu (Run, Melos); Tokyo Hakkei (Eight Tokyo Scenes); Shayō (The Setting Sun); and Ningen Shikkaku (No Longer Human). (See L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 666-670.)
253. Hirabayashi Taiko 寺田紀彦: (3.10.1905 - )
A novelist, born in Nagano Prefecture. Her childhood was overcast with family hardships. Without her parents’ permission the young authoress sat for the high school examinations. Because of her outstanding pass, her parents were induced to let her continue with higher education. From high school days Hirabayashi was an avid reader of Russian authors and socialist literature, soon to become caught up in the activities of the socialist movement. After graduating from high school she came up to Tokyo, where she worked as a telephone operator, a salesgirl at a German Bookshop, a waitress, etc. At that time she lost interest in the socialism of the Bolshevist type and joined a group of anarchists.

From her youth Hirabayashi began writing fairy tales and detective stories. Later, when she joined the proletarian literature movement, her stories and articles often appeared in the magazines of the leftist groups of writers. Eventually, she established her fame as a proletarian writer with the success of her novel Servoshitsu nite 療養室にて (At the Charity Hospital).

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese Incident in 1937 and during the Second World War Hirabayashi suffered a grave illness while in prison. Since the war she has recovered and made a come back with stories permeated with a deep sense of humanism. Her representative works are: Azakeru 嘲る (Mock); Servoshitsu Nite 療養室にて (At the Charity Hospital) and Kō In Onna ういうふす (This Kind of Woman). (See the L.M.J.L, Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 942-945. Also, Ivan Morris: Modern Japanese Stories - An Anthology, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle, 1962, pp. 365-366.)


Kubota Mantaro: (7.11.1889 - 6.5.1963)

A novelist, playwright and a haiku poet, born in Tokyo, Kubota showed a strong literary bent from middle school days. When he enrolled in the University to study literature, he began writing haiku. At the age of 22 Kubota was recommended by Mori Ōgai and Ueda Bin to Nagai Kafū. Thereupon he was able to publish in the Mita Bungaku magazine. His first novel Asaga 翡翠 (The Morning Glory) and his first play Yugi 遊戯 (Amusement) appeared in this magazine. For some time afterwards Kubota was an active member of the Mita Bungaku literary group.

However, Kubota achieved his main reputation as an outstanding playwright and producer. Together with Kishida Kunio and Iwata Toyoo 他田豊雄 he founded the Bungaku-za theatre group. He became so active in the theatre world that he was appointed the Director of the Japanese Drama Association after the war.

Meanwhile, Kubota was awarded the Kikuchi Kan prize in 1942. After winning many recognitions, he became a Director of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation in 1949. Among his many awards he won the 8th Yomiuri prize and the 16th Culture Medal in 1957. At the height of his many-sided cultural activities he died in 1963 at the age of 75.

Kubota left a total of 125 volumes of collected works, including novels, plays, essays, haiku compositions, etc. His representative works are: Uragare 後のち (Last Withering); Sabishikereba 皆しれば (If You Are Lonely); Odera Gakko 奥寺学校 (The Great Temple School); Shundei 春泥 (Spring Mud); Michi-Shiba 道立 (Grass on the Road) (A Collection of Haiku). etc. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 361-364.)


257. Quoted by Kubota Mantaro, ibid.

258. Quoted by Kubota Mantaro, ibid.


260. Ibid.

261. Quoted by Kubota Mantaro, ibid.

A novelist, poet, critic and a scholar of French literature, born in Tokyo. Nakamura lost both parents in early childhood, so he had to take up many side-line jobs to put himself through school. He graduated from the French Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University in 1941.

Classical Japanese literature was Nakamura's great love from high school days, but he also devoted much time to reading modern European literature. As a youth he associated with many leading Japanese men of letters and began publishing novels, poems, etc. In 1942, Nakamura Shinichirô, Fukunaga Takehiko 福永武彦 and Kato Shūichi 加藤周一, who were intimate friends from high school days, formed the Matinée Poétique group for research in literature.

While employed as an Instructor at the Conservatorium during the war, Nakamura spent most of his time studying European literature, especially the French psychological novelists, German Romanticist and English townsfolk novelists.

After the war Nakamura emerged as one of the leading writers of the postwar group including Noma Hiroshi 野間宏, Shiina Rinzō 畠山麟三 and Umezaki Haruo 梅崎春生. He participated in the formation of the Kindai Bungaku 近代文学 magazine, but because of the disension between the Matinée Poétique and the Kindai Bungaku group of writers he branched off to form a new magazine with Kato Shūichi and his old friends from the Matinée Poétique group. Nakamura was the central figure of the new publication, which had a strong influence on the young writers, but ended after a short existence with the publication of Bungaku 51. 文学

Nakamura strongly opposed the tradition of the Japanese Naturalist School and the 'I-novelists'. He was influenced by the twentieth century European writers, particularly Proust. He is inclined towards romanticism, which is related to his interest in the Heian literature. His most outstanding work is considered to be Shi no Kage no Moto ni 死の影の下に (Under the Shadow of Death).

(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 818-819.)
267. Hino Keizo: Commentary (see note 264.) p. 419.


270. Yagi Yoshinori: 八木義徳 (21.10.1911 - )
A novelist, born in Hokkaido. He graduated from the French Literature Department of Waseda University in 1938. Yagi was a disciple of Yokomitsu Riichi (see note 237), and in 1944 he was awarded the Akutagawa Prize. His representative work Watakushi no Sonya 私のソーニャ (My Sonya) was written under the influence of Thomas Mann. Yagi is one of the prominent postwar writers, distinguished by his search for a new style. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, p.1164.)


272. Ibid. p.6.

273. Takeda Taijun 弩田泰淳 : (12.2.1912 - )
A novelist and a scholar of Chinese literature. He began writing from early school days, although he had no ambition of becoming a writer. Like Akutagawa Ryunosuke and Dazai Osamu (see notes 69. and 247.) He spent much of his school days in reading and devoted himself particularly to Chinese literature. Also, he became involved in the leftist movement, which led to his later imprisonment. He enrolled in the Chinese Literature Department of Tokyo University, but he abandoned the course to form an Association for Research in Chinese Literature. Besides, he continued to read French writers with keen interest, especially Gide and Rimbaud.

For some time Takeda was mainly engaged in writing on Chinese literature, but gradually he began to publish original works and critiques. After the war his creative activities increased and in 1948 he joined the Kindai Bungaku group emerging as one of the representative writers of the First Postwar School. His representative works are: Shi-ba-sen 司馬遷 (A critical biography of Ssu-Ma-Chien); Mamushi no Sue 嫣のすえ (Viper's End); (a novelette); Hikarigoke びかりごけ (A Luminous Moss) (a novelette with the latter part dramatised into a play); Mori to Mizuumi no Matsuri 森と湖のまつり (The Festival of Forests and Lakes). (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 656-660.)
274. Quoted from the Ningen magazine by Noma Hiroshi in Mishima Yukio no Tanbi (The Aestheticism of Mishima Yukio), Bungaku-kai, February, 1951, p. 131.


276. Terada Toru: A literary critic and a scholar of French literature, born in Kanagawa prefecture. A Tokyo University graduate in French literature and an assistant professor at Tokyo University.
Main works: Sakka Shi-ron 作家私論 (Writers' Personal Discussion), (1949); Gendai Nihon Sakka Kenkyu (A Study of Modern Japanese Writers); Richi to Jonetsu (Intellect and Passion) (1963).
Apart from these collections of essays, Terada has produced translations from French. (See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meij Shoin, 1965, p. 733.)


278. Ibid. p. 46.


281. Ibid. p. 930.


284. Sugiura Mimpei: (9.6.1913 - )
A novelist, literary critic, translator and a scholar of Italian literature. Graduated from the Department of Japanese Literature of Tokyo Imperial University.
Sugiura inherited a love of literature from his mother and showed an interest in the Araragi School of tanka 精歌 poetry at a very young age. In high school days he associated with a group of friends like Terada Toru (see note 276) who shared his interest in literature. While
attending the university, Sugiura spent most of his time in reading and hardly ever appeared in lecture rooms. Nevertheless, he graduated in 1936, and, failing to obtain work, enrolled at a night school of foreign languages taking up Italian. Later, he pursued his research in Italian Renaissance literature while at the same time becoming attracted to Marxism. This was partly the result of a fierce dislike he felt for the Japanese Romantic School and for the writers of Yasuda Yojuro type. (see note 59.)

Since the war Sugiura has produced many original works and essays and taken an active part in the controversy of 'Politics and Literature'. He made a name for himself as a critic of postwar tanka and a scholar of the Renaissance literature. His representative works are: *Geijutsu to Jinsei no Kan* 芸術と人生の環 (The Realm of Art and Life) (1954); *Renesansu Bungaku no Kenkyū* レネサンス文学の研究 (Study of Renaissance Literature) (1948); *Gendai Nihon no Sakka* 現代日本の作家 (Modern Japanese Writers) (1952); *Bungaku no Hōkō* 文学の方向 (Literary Trends), (1956); *Kakumei Bungaku to Bungaku Kakumei* 革命文学と文学革命 (Revolutionary Literature and Literary Revolution) (1958); *Kurai Yoru no Kinen ni* 暗い夜の記念 (In Memory of a Dark Night) (1955); and *Sengo Tanka-Ron* 戦後短歌論 (Discussion of the Postwar Tanka).

(See the L.M.J.L., Tokyo, Meiji Shoin, 1965, pp. 588-589.)


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(Note: argues that it was not only the stagecraft of the Noh but the subtle symbolism which is the quintessence of the Japanese classical drama that exerted influence on Yeats's later plays.)


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