



Mishima: A Biography

John Nathan

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At forty-five, Yukio Mishima was the outstanding Japanese writer of his generation, celebrated both at home and abroad for *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*. In 1970 he startled the world by stepping out onto a balcony in Tokyo before an assembly of troops and plunging a sword into his abdomen; a disciple then beheaded him, completing the ritual of hara-kiri. John Nathan's riveting biography traces the life of this tortured, nearly superhuman personality. Mishima survived a grotesque childhood, and subsequently his sadomasochistic impulses became manifest—as did an increasing obsession with death as the supreme beauty. Nathan, who knew Mishima professionally and personally, interviewed family, colleagues, and friends to unmask the various—often seemingly contradictory—personae of the genius who felt called by "a glittering destiny no ordinary man would be permitted."

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