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The Samurai and the Artist: Henry Miller's *Reflections on the Death of Mishima*

Wayne E. Arnold

Introduction

- ¹ The year 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of Mishima Yukio's dramatic ritual suicide on 25 November 1970, an event that stunned Japan and the rest of the world.¹ When the news reached American author Henry Miller (1891-1980), he immediately felt a reverberating shock. Moved to write about the incident, in March 1971 he began composing the short epistle *Reflections on the Death of Mishima*. Translated into Japanese by Tobita Shigeo, the article was serialized in one of Japan's most popular gossip magazines, the *Shuukan Post* (*Weekly Post*) in October and November of 1971. The manuscript was only published in mass media form in Japan, giving us the impression that Miller was writing specifically for Japanese readers; archival materials, however, make clear that Miller was eager to publish an English version of the article in the West. Outside of Japan, *Reflections* was a complete commercial failure, as Miller was unable to place the essay in the mainstream—or even obscure—media outlets. Certain events surrounding the Japanese publication of *Reflections* expose why the opinion piece created merely a momentary impression in Japan and nearly no impact throughout the rest of the world. The sources from which Miller gathered information for his article reveal a meticulous search for understanding; yet, a few crucial mistakes were made concerning the composition and marketing of the essay: these missteps would turn *Reflections* into Miller's foremost overpriced and ineffective composition.² As his longest piece on Japan, the unique perspective and self-gratifying purpose of his writing, combined with the failed efforts to publish elsewhere, has reduced *Reflections*—for better or worse—to an abandoned treatise in both Mishima and Miller studies.

- 2 Miller was not unique in his interest concerning Mishima's suicide. Academics and artists alike wrote on Mishima within a few years of his death. Gore Vidal, John Nathan, Oliver Evans, Donald Keene, and Faubion Bowers³ published pieces discussing their memories and impressions of Mishima, helping to initiate the growing realm of *Mishimaology*. Miller's lack of prominence among those who wrote about Mishima, as we will see, is partly due to miscalculations. One of the weakest elements of Miller's text is that he never met Mishima, and so his knowledge was left to secondhand sources.⁴ Miller was vocal about his interest in the suicide, informing numerous people about the new project dedicated to Mishima. In an interview in early 1971, he told the Japanese interviewer that, "this incident should be mourned. It's this fantastic writer, dramatic writer, this writer with such a big image, talking about the emperor and tradition and bushido" (Shinoda 167). Even though Miller maintained a certain infatuation about Mishima, *Reflections* reveals his syncretistic habit of looking to his own valuations to process Mishima's traditional bushido death in the face of the modernization and westernization of Japan.

- 3 Briefly outlined, *Reflections* is written in two parts, at just under ten thousand words. Miller begins by addressing the apparent absurdity of a Westerner attempting to comprehend Mishima's intentions. At first, the article appears to ramble from death, to love and war, to the afterlife and reincarnation—even including a dream-like scenario with Mishima, replete with champagne and cigars—finally ending by lamenting Mishima's preoccupation with war instead of peace. Additionally, the tone varies. Miller is first respectful and morose over what he considers to be a sacrificial act by Mishima for the sake of patriotism. Gradually, Miller assumes a superior tone, emphasizing the pointlessness of trying to change the world. In the second half, he self-consciously observes his mocking tone concerning Mishima's "little band of well-tailored soldiers" (1977 53), and he spends several paragraphs ruminating over questions that might expose Mishima's philosophies. This Socratic style (the text has dozens of declarative questions) exposes Miller's preoccupation with fulfilling "*un examen de conscience*" while contemplating Mishima's actions. Miller considered himself apolitical; *Reflections*, however, carries significant political undercurrents, with references to the atomic bombs, the Vietnam War, Japanese rearmament, and the Westernization of Japan (indirect references arise concerning Che Guevara, as well as Marx and Engels).

- 4 Unlike other Miller articles, the Mishima piece is unique since correspondence during this period includes references to materials Miller was reading. One of the few scholars to mention *Reflections* notes that "Miller's work is especially interesting in that it provides what seems now like an almost parodic catalogue of attitudes prevalent at the time, including an exotic view of the traditions of Japan that Mishima lamented" (Washburn 268n2). Aptly perceptive, there are indeed a variety of sources that influenced Miller's opinion of Mishima, sources that subtly work their way into his essay. *Reflections* is unique in Miller's own way, yet the obvious presence of a "catalog of attitudes" reduced his ability to publish the article outside of Japan. Even before its translation and publication in Japan, Miller attempted but failed to secure a mainstream American publisher. The composition remained unpublished in English until Capra Press released it in a booklet edition (1972); not until *Sextet* (1977) did the piece appear in a collection of essays.⁵ Significantly, the Japanese publisher purchased the manuscript for \$10,000, having guaranteed Miller its publication before the article

was written.⁶ The high price is emblematic of Mishima's public image, as he was "the author who most used, and was most used by, the commercialism of mass society" (S. Kato 287). Paired with Miller's widespread celebrity status in Japan, the potential article was a valuable combination of two high profile artists, as the editors of the *Shuukan Post* were well aware.

Miller Regarding Mishima, Mishima Regarding Miller

- 5 Examining the composition process for *Reflections* best begins with Miller's intentions. Shortly after hearing of Mishima's death, Miller knew he needed to put his thoughts into writing, as the event impacted him more than Hemingway's suicide (Brassaï 165). He began gathering articles and taking notes so that by mid-February he had made a significant list of points, as he informed his publisher, Robert MacGregor, at New Directions:

I have made many notes on Mishima's sensational death and am now ready to write a serious, perhaps lengthy article [...]. I am waiting impatiently to get a copy of *The Sea of Fertility*—both in Japanese and English. I am going to write my article for a big Japanese publisher—for one of their magazines. The editor, who knew Mishima well, was here to see me the other day. I am not going to pretend to give a portrait of Mishima nor evaluate his work. (After all, he produced many books and we know only a few.) My effort will be more of *un examen de conscience*—an attempt to register certain reflections and re-valuations (of life and death) provoked by his sensational act.⁷

- 6 Another person Miller informed was Lawrence Durrell, telling his friend that he planned "to write rather fulsomely about Mishima's suicide. Seems to have some strange meaning for me" (Miller and Durrell 444). In various letters, Miller makes clear that, while Mishima's death was to be the main impetus, he intended to evaluate the event from his position as an author; in other words, as John Burnside notes about Miller's style, Miller was writing "to make it all about me" (xxiv). This tenet in Miller's writing has been noted time and again, where he writes "as 'double' of his chosen author-subject" (Cooney 12), and so approaching Mishima in this fashion is unsurprising.
- 7 Significantly, the two authors share no strong affinity for each other. Emphasizing the self while examining other artists typifies Miller and Mishima's approaches to writing criticism. In Andrew Rankin's opinion, "even when Mishima is reflecting on the works of other writers and artists, his first topic of interest is always himself" (43). Echoing Burnside's impression concerning Miller's methodology, we might assume that the two men could appreciate their mutually comparable approach. Yet, Rankin makes clear that Mishima considers style in critique to be tantamount. For Mishima, Miller's style often equals noise: "The reason I dislike Miller is very simple," Mishima told Abe Kobo, "I read his study of Rimbaud [*Time of the Assassins* (1956)]. It was a very chatty study, like he was running around Rimbaud screaming and hollering. But it misses Rimbaud's quietness (僕がヘンリー・ミラーがきらいな動機は、とても簡単なんです。あれのランボオ論を読んだが、そうしたらおしゃべりなランボオ論でね、ランボオの回りをウワーッとしゃべりながら、駆けずり回っているのだよ。しかしランボオの沈黙というのは、逸しているのだよ)" (Abe and Mishima 239). In the 1959 review of the Rimbaud book, Mishima condemns

such exaggerated expressions in the face of something so absolutely pure and easy to understand [and] makes me feel rather irritated at Miller and Westerners in general [...].

(絶対の無垢という、わかりやすいものを前にして、これほど仰々しい言葉の行列を並べてみせる、ミラー及び西洋人といふものを、私はどうも鬱陶しく思ふ) (“Ranbou-Ron” 158)

Rankin further contends that Mishima tended to review works by authors he admired, and thus it is unusual to find a negative review; as such, his assessment of Miller is doubly damning in its uncommonness. Since the interview and review were never published in English, it is unlikely Miller knew the extent of Mishima's thoughts on his writing. In this light, Mishima probably would not have appreciated Miller's *Reflections*. While the “*examen de conscience*” approach may have agreed with Mishima, there is the likelihood that Miller's style would continue to displease Mishima's particular tastes. Compounding Miller's difficulties in approaching Mishima is that he had a very limited understanding of Mishima's oeuvre, thereby preventing him from achieving a deeper understanding of the man and his actions. Considering that his works cover a 43-volume set (published by Tonkobon), Miller had no hope in surveying even a small fraction of Mishima's output.⁸ The little he could read, he rather disliked; to Anaïs Nin, Miller admitted, “he's very difficult to follow, I find, when he explains things. Even the Japanese agree to this” (Nin 174). As we will see, Miller's affinity for Mishima went from strong attraction to a more social distancing after the article was published in Japan.

- 8 Academic evaluation of Miller's *Reflections* has been minimal. Within Japanese academia on Miller, in *The Bulletin of the Henry Miller Society of Japan* and the succeeding *Delta: Studies on Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin and Lawrence Durrell*, only one critic directly addresses the Mishima article. Shimizu Tamako's opinion on *Reflections* perhaps makes clear why Japanese scholars have chosen to avoid it:

I came to realize that Miller was speaking of his own ideology, using Mishima like a prop he could sway back and forth along the way. In the end, there is not much use in talking about what parts of Mishima Miller understood correctly and where he was mistaken. Surprisingly, I've come to realize that it's far easier for me to understand Mishima's life and death than it is for me to understand Miller's ideologies.

(ミラーは三島という木の葉を浮かべて右へ左へ揺り動かしながら、ミラー自身の、滔々とした大河の流れるような思想を語っていることに気がつくのだ。最終的には、ミラーがどの点で三島を正しく理解し、どの点で誤っているかを論ずることはあまり意味がなくなってしまう。そして、驚いたことに、ここで語られるミラーの思想よりは、三島の生と死のありようの方が私にとってはるかに理解しやすいことに気がつくのだ。ミラーを理解する手がかりは、その思想に分け入る知の行為なのに比べて、三島を私は体質で理解できる) (Shimizu 25-26)

Shimizu intimates that an innate ability as a Japanese (cultural and historical) allows for a more identifiable perspective concerning Mishima's actions; whereas, someone like Miller requires “knowledge,” by gathering information from external sources to form conclusions. In an opposite direction would be writer Ueno Shōri (上野霄里), to whom we will return to shortly. In *Single-Celled Thought* (単細胞的思, 1969) and then in *Tropiques en Voyageur* (1970), Ueno wrote critically of Mishima and his lifestyle. In the latter text, Ueno reveals in a chapter entitled “Beautiful Ideology and Pharisaical Behavior (思想は美しく行動は喜劇的),” that letters received from Miller and then reading *Reflections* helped him comprehend how his view of Mishima was “horribly myopic (ひどくせばめられていることに気付いた),” as he realizes that “from Miller's

perspective, the death of Mishima was an embodiment of the Japanese people's characteristic straightforwardness, overwork, deficiency of playfulness, and exceeding boorishness (ミラーからみれば、三島の死は、日本人の生一本さ、あくせく働いてばかりいて、あそびを知らない、至極、無粋な民族的生格の典型にほかならないのであった)” (48), negative impressions, that as we will see, were not fully present in Miller's text. More recent criticism on the Miller piece has found some redeeming quality. Okamoto Masaaki (岡本正明) claims that “Miller does not just examine [the idea of] ‘Mishima’ alone. Through [*Reflections*] he builds discussion on Japan (and Japanese people), and by confronting the ‘other’ that is ‘Mishima,’ he also clarifies his own ideological stance (ミラーは「ミシマ」それ自体を論じるばかりでなく、それを通して日本（人）論を展開しており、また、「ミシマ」という〈他者〉と対決することで、自己の思想的立場を明確にしてゆくのである)” (Okamoto 265). While Okamoto insists that Miller's approach is unique among Western reaction to the incident, it seems that the majority of Mishima scholars tend to follow Shimizu's reaction. The abstractness of Miller's text causes Japanese biographers to avoid it, and the few Western biographies touching on *Reflections* do so only tangentially, such as Peter Wolfe's *Yukio Mishima* (1989),⁹ or Andrew Rankin's *Mishima: Aesthetic Terrorist* (2018).¹⁰

- 9 The majority of Miller's biographers have chosen to sidestep the publication, avoiding any exploration of the context surrounding its composition.¹¹ The few biographers who have mentioned *Reflections* accept Miller's infatuation with Japan, but they do not promote the work as important. It has been referred to as “a wide-ranging provocative meditation,” that “demonstrates Miller's gift, even at this late stage in his career, for composing joyful, effortless, fluent and effervescent prose” (Calonne 155–56). Kingsley Widmer went so far as to state that “Miller's new interest in things Japanese led to a number of inconsequential essays, including *Reflections*” (133). No articles in *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal* or *A Café in Space: The Anaïs Nin Literary Journal* directly address the piece; nevertheless, Harry Kiakis, Katrin Burtschell, and Javant Biarujia mention Japan and Mishima in relation to Miller (see Kiakis 195–97; Burtschell 56; Biarujia 22–26). Caroline Blinder's *A Self-Made Surrealist* (2000) is the most noteworthy examination of Georges Bataille, Miller, and Mishima. Blinder argues that Mishima “does exactly that from which Miller ultimately backs off—namely renounces the life of the artist in favor of direct action” (119). Blinder's analysis is a complex and intricate look at Miller's *Reflections*, and as we will see, she is correct to note that Miller purposefully avoids a clear analysis of Mishima.
- 10 With such omissions and rejections by Miller and Mishima scholars, the reader might wonder why we should now give attention to *Reflections* fifty years after its composition. The intention of this article is not to reveal some previously unseen wonder in Miller's essay, perhaps there is none. What I hope to demonstrate is that Miller earnestly wanted to compose a meaningful reflection spurred by the events of November 25, perhaps achieving his personal goal. It does seem, however, that Miller was approaching a historic event that he could not even remotely fathom. Yet, he tried. In the following sections, I walk through the various materials Miller had at his disposal. Long before the age of the Internet and Google Translate, Miller was left with three specific sources to help frame his thoughts. First and foremost was the media. For years prior to Mishima's suicide, dozens of articles and newspaper stories were published concerning his life as a famous author, followed by those centered on his

dramatic death. A second source came through Miller's correspondences.¹² To date, the majority of Miller's letters concerning Mishima have been unincorporated by scholars; therefore, utilization of this material provides a fresh perspective into Miller's thoughts. Finally, Miller did have access to the scant number of translations of Mishima's works.

Oriental Exposure: Tracking Miller and Mishima

- 11 An obvious question that arises is: when did Miller first read Mishima's literature? In the 1953 French edition of *The Books in My Life*, Miller includes a comprehensive 75-page list of books he had read thus far: Mishima is not included. In 1955, New Directions helped publish a supplement to *The Atlantic*, entitled "Perspectives on Japan." Miller thoroughly read the issue.¹³ Briefly mentioned is the young Mishima, who, according to one article, "has so far written mostly of homosexuality, which seems to be for him a symbol of a more general cultural malady" (Nakajima and Seidensticker 169). The next significant date is May 1957, when Miller's Japanese acquaintance, Kubo Sadajiro, shipped to Miller's home in Big Sur, California four newly published English translations of Japanese novels, among which was Mishima's *The Sound of Waves* (1954).¹⁴ Almost certainly this would have been Miller's first exposure to Mishima's writing, and perhaps his last until Mishima's global rise to notoriety in 1970.¹⁵ With numerous Japanese visiting Miller's house in Pacific Palisades during the 1960s, someone may have given him a Mishima novel; however, Mishima's name seldom appears in Miller's letters before November 25, 1970. After this point, he became enraptured by a man he had hitherto only known through Japanese friends or the typical news sources. Further proof of his limited knowledge of Mishima comes when he requested Robert MacGregor at New Directions to send the two Mishima books they published.¹⁶ In *Reflections*, Miller makes direct reference to only three of Mishima's translations: *Confessions of a Mask*, *Sun and Steel*, and *Pavilion of the Golden Temple*.¹⁷ We can assume Miller only read three or four novels by Mishima—meaning that much of what he discusses in *Reflections* depends greatly on his correspondences and secondary English sources.
- 12 Likely the first person in Japan to learn of Miller's desire to write on the Mishima incident was the previously mentioned Ueno Shōri, a philosopher of sorts living in Iwate Prefecture, and a regular Miller correspondent since 1966.¹⁸ Ueno provided opinions that appear to have guided aspects of Miller's ideas for *Reflections*. Having previously discussed Mishima, the suicide brought the author to the forefront of several letters, with Ueno noting on December 11, 1970:

The dangerous fantasy of the Warrior's Spirit, or Bushido, has recently become the main theme of his literature and eventually of his life. [...]. How feminine he was! What he did is nothing but a women's historical deed. In fact, he couldn't write anymore. When he, who is a fiction writer from his birth, tries to put what he has written into action, he can't help but face self-destruction!¹⁹

During the 1970 year-end holidays, Miller informed Ueno of his desire to write on Mishima, an idea the latter encouraged. Ueno was critical of both Mishima and the current state of Japan, telling Miller that "the tragedy of Mishima is but the symbol of this whole race in the Far East."²⁰ Their correspondence, in particular, touches on Mishima's persistent contemplation of death. "Mishima was born under the fate that he had to die young," Ueno writes, "no one could imagine Mishima at 80 years."²¹ Such sentiments are echoed in *Reflections*, when Miller considers that Mishima "wanted to

die in the flower of life, while still beautiful, strong of body and at the height of his career. He did not want to die a dog's death" (1977 27). Mishima despised old age and often denigrated older generations; in a 1964 article for *Life Magazine*, he pondered the slovenliness of Americans, wondering, "why can't Americans grow old beautifully?" ("A Famous" 84). He would have disagreed with both Miller and Ueno and their observations on his method and age of death, especially concerning his devotion to constructing his body, as discussed in *Sun & Steel* (1968).

- 13 By February, Miller had outlined his ideas for the Mishima article and sent a copy to Ueno. The contents greatly excited Ueno, who wrote enthusiastically:

This note of yours on Mishima is to be one of my Bibles! Do please write out your essay along this line and it will be not only one on Mishima's death but also the most effective and powerful and shocking essay to regenerate the Japanese race out of the dying state. I'm telling you, this note will make the most dynamic work for awakening the Japanese.²²

The letter makes clear that Miller's opinions were hard-hitting and direct, so that Ueno could only hope Miller would follow through. The letter arrived at a crucial moment, as Ueno stresses the potency of Miller's raw thoughts on Mishima and Japan. If Miller followed them, Ueno stressed, the impact in Japan would be powerful. The problem, as we will see, is that Miller disregarded Ueno's opinions concerning his fellow countryman.

- 14 Worth attention is a significant parallel between one of Ueno's letters and *Reflections*. In a letter from December 1970, a correlation is made between Mishima and his final audience in front of the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Forces. Describing the onlookers, Ueno writes,

those soldiers Mishima addressed in his last 15-minute short speech are mere salaried men, they are pigs. Christ and Buddha have also preached to the multitude of pigs. Even if one shows them the true warm blood of Christ or Buddha, they wouldn't be touched nor moved with it. Only money and social honor could touch and move their heart.²³

These biting words and religious parallels are similarly echoed when Miller asks the deceased Mishima: "You worked so much, so hard, all your life—and to what end? Can you not give us another book, from the beyond, about the futility of work? Your countrymen need it; they are working like bees and ants. But are they enjoying the fruits of their labor, as the Creator intended them to? Do they look upon their work and find it good?" (1977 48–49). Miller touches on an underlying and painful nerve in Japanese society, as Mishima's suicide "stimulated uncomfortable speculations about the materially rich but spiritually impoverished present" (Napier 216). Religious analogies appear in the musings of Ueno and Miller; yet, it is not this Biblical imagery but rather the futility of work through which their words parallel Mishima's final speech. From the roof, he yelled to the soldiers below, "You will do nothing for your country. I have lost my dream for you. You are nothing but a bunch of American mercenaries" (qtd. in Scott-Stokes, "Lost Samurai" 60). Considering Mishima's dramatic location of his final speech—a proverbial Moses on the mount—Miller and Ueno transmute Mishima into a religious figure, a leader who chose the wrong path to reach his converts. Religious analogies aside, all three men agree on the same point: due to material aspirations, the average Japanese is failing to achieve a meaningful existence. Mishima's jab at American commercialism would not have been lost on Miller.

- 15 In March 1971, Ueno became concerned about where Miller intended to publish *Reflections*. He provided several suggestions and warned Miller about trusting his work to the weekly magazines. Ueno was directly disparaging of *Shuukan Post* and informed Miller that such magazines were “all gossips, no academic nor literary elements in it. [...] When you give your works to the Japanese magazine, be sure it's not the weekly one.”²⁴ Having avoided informing Ueno of his agreement with a weekly magazine, Miller, of course, went ahead and published his reflections with the *Shuukan Post*. He probably cannot be blamed, considering the \$10,000 payment he received in May 1971 (Miller and Durrell 449). Ueno correctly feared that if Miller's article were to be published in a gossip magazine, the impact would be greatly dampened; “do please think it over,” he pleaded.²⁵ By this point, it was too late for Ueno's advice to be heeded. Perhaps it was Ueno's deriding of these periodicals that caused Miller to reconsider his approach to Mishima. Perhaps Miller wondered if his initial stance might be too aggressive for the general readership of a weekly magazine. Nevertheless, he reconsidered his perspective and significantly altered his approach from the original notes.

A Western Perception of Mishima

- 16 While Ueno was Miller's foremost Japanese informant on Mishima, Robert MacGregor at New Directions was his greatest source of firsthand information on Mishima. MacGregor had known Mishima for more than a decade, as New Directions was publishing two of his novels (at the insistence of Donald Keene). The letters exchanged during this period are extensive and focus on Mishima. MacGregor also sent Miller important materials—both published and unpublished—concerning Mishima. Specifically, Miller received the articles by Faubion Bowers (along with MacGregor's published refutation), Donald Keene's article, a copy of a Mishima letter to MacGregor, and a piece by Eido Tai Shimano.²⁶ I will turn attention to the Bowers and Shimano pieces shortly. MacGregor's communication with Miller is an important backdrop to *Reflections*, as MacGregor had a professional relationship with Mishima. The exchange between the two men provided information from a trusted source, helping Miller to sift through some of the more outlandish claims concerning Mishima's life and ritual suicide.
- 17 Certainly, the most unflattering response to Mishima's death was composed by Faubion Bowers (1917-1999), a scholar of Asian Studies. Bowers' piece, published in the December 3 issue of *The Village Voice*, offended numerous people, including Miller and MacGregor. Miller referred to it as “very strange,” believing that “Bowers gave a nasty, sensational picture of Mishima.”²⁷ MacGregor went so far as to compose a lengthy letter to the editor in which he asserted that “the article by Faubion Bowers [...] saddened me almost as much as Mishima's suicide the previous week, for I have known Mr. Bowers longer than I knew Mishima, and can remember when Bowers wrote brilliantly, accurately, and with generosity” (MacGregor 4). The next letter to the editor was signed by MacGregor and eleven friends and acquaintances of Mishima, including Donald Keene. In their statement, they systematically debunk what they consider to be Bowers' unfounded denigrations against Mishima.
- 18 One paragraph in Bowers' *Village Voice* article specifically caught Miller's attention and received a parallel retort in *Reflections*. After recalling how Mishima had been

unfulfilled during a one-night stand with a Kabuki actor (because “it was like sleeping with a woman”), Bowers connects a series of images surrounding Mishima’s physique. He mentions the publication *Young Samurai: Bodybuilders of Japan* (1966), containing photographs of Mishima and young Japanese weightlifters, noting that Mishima’s interest in training had shifted from weights to martial arts. In more recent photos, Bowers claims that Mishima’s body, with “that crew cut of his,” had started sagging. Mishima’s use of the hichimaki is also mocked, and Bowers incorrectly claims it serves to keep long hair out of the eyes. The paragraph concludes with Bowers pondering when Mishima began counterfeiting himself—wondering when the “Golden Samurai” had evolved into a false representation of the author-warrior (Bowers). Conversely, in the *Reflections* paragraph rebuffing Bowers—without mentioning him—Miller touches on homosexuality with relation to bodybuilding, brotherhood, and the samurai. He begins by stating that “in the matter of developing his own body, which he did superbly, Mishima was dead serious and made it an end in itself,” thereby rejecting the idea that Mishima’s physique had weakened. But Miller pivots, asking, “is there not something feminine, something ridiculous about this cult of the body?”²⁸ This questioning by Miller should give us pause as he actively participated in “physical culture” in his younger years. As Mary Dearborn explains, Miller was very much involved in athletic training (Dearborn 45-46); yet, it may have been Mishima’s media glorification of this cult of that body that repulsed Miller. Nevertheless, both Miller and Bowers use the phrase “cult of the body” in their corresponding paragraphs, and in almost direct response, Miller contrasts the body and sexuality of the warrior. He does so by recounting a memory of a childhood storybook with illustrations depicting a “little band of Spartans [...] before battle, combing and braiding their long hair. They looked beautiful and effeminate, heroes though they might be” (1977 36). The story and drawings containing these effeminate long-haired Spartans (juxtaposing Mishima’s crew cut?) taught the young Miller about brotherhood, a term which he now applies to the samurai of ancient days, also calling attention to Mishima’s *Young Samurai*. Unfortunately, like Bowers, Miller displays his homophobic view of sexual practices in the modern era by expressing a disdain for “the buggery that goes on in modern armies” (1977 36), which vitiates, he believes, the brotherhood of the samurai that Mishima may have been pursuing. Concluding the paragraph in this manner, Miller unintentionally aligns himself with the same misguided observations that Bowers concocts—essentially defeating the overall rebuttal.

- 19 A direct outcome of Miller’s conversations with Robert MacGregor was his exposure to the Zen Buddhist monk Eido Tai Shimano.²⁹ Shimano was also moved by Mishima’s actions and undertook an interpretation of the suicide from the perspective of Buddhist reincarnation. In a short, unpublished essay on the incident, which includes an overview of Mishima’s *Spring Snow* (1969), *Runaway Horses* (1969), and *Temple of the Dawn* (1970), Shimano offers his opinion that Mishima’s novels foretold the death of the novelist and his definite reincarnation. Specifically, Shimano latches onto Mishima’s repeated refrain that after the conclusion of *The Sea of Fertility*, he believed his life work to be complete. Shimano put forth the argument that Mishima “killed himself with the absolute conviction that he will be born again. His death is therefore an experiment of his belief.”³⁰ Alongside these sentences, Miller jotted three parallel lines, a standard notation marking a section with which he agreed.³¹ Having read Shimano’s three-page essay, Miller wrote MacGregor, exclaiming:

This explanation of Mishima's suicide by your friend Shimano is most exciting. I wonder if Mr. Shimano would give me permission to quote a few lines from it, especially the last part? Did this text of his appear in some paper, book or magazine—or will it soon? It is, of course, a conjecture on his part, as I read it. He does not say that Mishima told him, or anyone, for that matter, that he expected to be reincarnated. I frankly do not see the connection between his dramatic death and the message of reincarnation to the Japanese people. (Miller and Laughlin 248)

Miller returned to Shimano's composition in more than one letter to MacGregor. Particularly important from Miller's perspective was that Shimano was a Buddhist monk, which provided credibility to his interpretations concerning Mishima's death. Miller did not agree wholeheartedly with Shimano, but based on Miller's textual notations, he was deeply engaged with the opinions therein. On the top of the first page, Miller wrote, "we'll discuss issues when we meet in Devachan over a bottle of dream champagne" (1977 46). While it is not clear which section of Shimano's ideas elicited Miller's desire for dialogue over dream champagne, this notation appears near-verbatim in *Reflections*. In Devachan, Miller anticipates meeting Mishima and as they begin chatting, Miller calls "for champagne and cigars—dream champagne, dream cigars, to be sure—but neither of us would have known the difference" (1977 46). The theme of reincarnation runs through Mishima's tetralogy, and even though Miller was unable to read the series due to language barriers he was intrigued by Shimano's ideas, formulating a mock dialogue with Mishima as they both await their rebirths.

20 In 1966, Miller was contacted by an academic named Oliver Wendell Evans (1915-1981). Evans was also close friends with Tennessee Williams, and the two had traveled together to Japan, meeting Mishima in 1970. Over a handful of years, letters were exchanged between Miller and Evans. Crucially, the pair corresponded in the spring of 1971, while Miller was working on *Reflections*, and Evans loaned Miller his copy of *Sun & Steel*, which had been recently translated by John Bester and published by Kodansha. The book proved to be an integral part of *Reflections*, and in both *Reflections* and a letter to Evans, Miller expresses puzzlement over Mishima's desire to destroy the body at its peak, a sentiment also shared by Evans.³²

21 Evans and Miller held an interest in Mishima that would lead to an unexpected twist in Miller's failure to place *Reflections* with an American publisher. Shortly after loaning Miller *Sun & Steel*, Evans stressed that the book needed to be quickly returned so he could quote from it for an upcoming article concerning his dinner in Tokyo with Mishima and Tennessee Williams. Miller had initially approached *Esquire* magazine in March 1971 concerning his article.³³ Overindulged with the price paid by the Japanese publisher, Miller was unwilling to allow the text to be piecemealed to American magazines. By September, he had nearly placed the piece with *Esquire*. In correspondence with the magazine, Miller touted the fact the Japanese publishers paid \$10,000 for the piece. *Esquire* at first balked, offering only \$1500.³⁴ When Miller protested, the associate editor acquiesced to a higher price once the product had been evaluated. By this point, Miller had lost his competitive leverage with *Esquire* due to wasting time and then by the submission of Evans's Mishima article. In the end, the magazine rejected Miller's piece, claiming that, "several of us here have read your Mishima piece and, though we all admired it, I'm afraid that we will have to pass on it. The basic reason is that there is a consensus here that it is a bit late to publish anything on the subject."³⁵ Miller was not oblivious to the competition concerning Mishima, as the magazine had informed him that they were considering other pieces: little did

Miller realize that he was vying with Oliver Evans (thus Evans's request to have *Sun & Steel* quickly returned). Much to Miller's chagrin, Evans's "A Quiet Evening with Yukio Mishima" was published in the May 1972 edition of *Esquire* magazine.

- 22 As these events with the magazine editors were unfolding, Evans again visited Tokyo in the early fall of 1971, during which sections of the Japanese *Reflections* were hitting the marketplace. In Tokyo, Evans met a Japanese man named Tobita Shigeo (1927–2002). Tobita had translated some of Miller's lesser-known works, but most significantly he had recently finished the translation of *Reflections*. Their first conversation revolved around Miller and the American literary scene; shortly thereafter, in November 1971, Tobita sent Evans a letter that Evans then partly transcribed for Miller. "Especially I was delighted to know that you are acquainted with Henry Miller," Tobita wrote, "for I not only translated some of his works [...] but also I wrote a paper on his philosophy of acceptance."³⁶ Evans provided an encouraging endorsement of Tobita, telling Miller: "I found this young man [...] very personable and surprisingly knowledgeable about contemporary American literature. You may be hearing from him soon." Indeed, shortly after Evans's letter, Miller was contacted by Tobita. As the translator of *Reflections*, Tobita provided Miller important insight into the public reaction to the article:

Just now Mr. Hayashi of the *Weekly Post* [*Shuukan Post*] rang me up. Here is his message to you: "Thank you very much, Mr. Miller. [Your essay] called forth tremendous echo among Japanese [intellectuals] and the sale of the magazines soared beyond all expectation. Your contribution proved to be a special providence for our company." I don't think he exaggerated. Even now people ask me to obtain for them those copies which carried your essays. Again you seem to have successfully awakened thousands of our countrymen to the fact that what we need most is leisure in time and mind [...].³⁷

Such feedback was valuable and meaningful for Miller, as he could not directly discern the reaction to his work in Japan. He presumed *Reflections* would be impactful due to the price paid by the *Weekly Post*, but it was not until Tobita's confirmation that Miller became aware just how significant it had been for the Japanese. Replying, Miller thanked Tobita, explaining:

the message you transmit me from Mr. Hayashi of the *Weekly Post* makes me feel very warm inside. Really, it is I who am indebted to him. I have not been able to place my Mishima text anywhere else (except in French, together with other short texts, in book form). Maybe I arrived too late with my reflections on his death. But I am happy indeed to hear my text had such an effect upon the Japanese readers.³⁸

- 23 The reaction in Japan to the circumstance and pomp surrounding Mishima's death cannot be underestimated; numerous weekly magazines covering the death scandal sold out during the month of December 1970 (Kato 5), and when the five-issue serialization of *Reflections* appeared, marking the first anniversary of the seppuku spectacle, Mishima continued garnering headline news. It also helped that Tobita's translation appeared during the trial of the surviving three soldiers who had participated in the coup at the Defense Forces.³⁹ After publication in the *Shuukan Post*, Miller received a letter from his father-in-law Tokuda Rokuro, who noted: "As to your Mishima article series, I read it every week with great interest. I believe that the series gave something worth reflection to the public in general, particularly those involved persons, as the court case to try the Mishima's criminals was accidentally in session during the press advertisings of your article."⁴⁰ The combination of the political trial as well as Miller's popular status brought a significant return on investment for the

Shuukan Post and helped promote Miller's name as well as Tobita's career as a translator.

Failure to Secure: Missing Mishima

- 24 While Miller received meaningful commendation from the publisher and translator, the piece was not unanimously praised. Significantly, and the point to consider, Miller's final version of *Reflections* veered noticeably away from his original notes sent to Ueno, so much so that when the final publication appeared in late 1971, Ueno hardly commented on it. The outcome left him disappointed and he considered the final version as neither effective nor powerful. The Mishima notes Miller sent to Ueno are lost, and the location of Miller's original memos (sold in 1998 at a PBA Galleries auction) are unknown. Fortunately, and without Miller's knowledge, Ueno translated the pages into Japanese to share with his readers.⁴¹ A brief section reveals that Miller started with a much more critical impression of Mishima—and Japan: "His glorification of bodies and sports," Miller mused, "his worship of bushido and the emperor, it's all so foolish these days. [...]. A bigger problem for Japan is its attitude toward women. Effort is needed for this—and it will make Japan stronger. Racist attitudes must be expelled."⁴² Noticeably, *Reflections* avoids mention of respecting women and the racist tendencies in Japan. In 1972, Ueno lamented the weakness of the published version, regretting its lack of impact. Miller replied,

I didn't mean to be "too polite" in writing about Mishima—I simply felt I had no right to be too critical since I didn't know him in person and had read only a few of his books. I understand he strongly disapproved of my "bad language"—the obscene words, etc. He was a strange mélange of warrior, dilettante, homosexual, metaphysician etc., etc. Not very profound. Too esthetic for my taste.⁴³

- 25 Miller eventually tempered his overall impression of Mishima, and similar to Mishima's dislike of Miller's "noisy" evaluation of Rimbaud, Miller came to view Mishima's actions as quite foreshortened. In a 1972 interview, he spoke extensively about Mishima, highlighting the weakness he saw in the suicide and repeating his confusion over the anomaly surrounding the man:

I like intelligent people. I hate intellectuals. Mishima isn't an intellectual. [...]. Mishima was intelligent and a genius but had limits as a human. He couldn't see the bigger picture. He could never be enlightened to life itself. He didn't have the strength to accept his own life. Like the seasons, life has its spring, summer, fall, and winter, and each is beautiful. It's as though he decided to end it all at spring and summer. He considered death beautiful. He chose death. But that beauty has become like a caricature. He thought beauty to be something eternal, but in reality, it likely doesn't exist at all. In this way, the "beauty" with which he was so obsessed has ultimately lost all its meaning. That beauty is one abstract idea. At least, that's how I feel.

(私はインテリジェンスが好きだ。知識人というのは大きらいだよ。ミシマは知識人ではない。[...]。三島はインテリであり、天才であったが、人間としての限界があった。彼ねは、より大きな世界が見えなかった。ライフというのは、季節のように春があり、夏があり、そして、秋冬とあり、それぞれに美しいものだ。彼は春と夏で終わりにしてしまったようなものだ。彼は死を美しいとしてそれを選んだが、その美のしても戯画のようになってしまっている。彼はその美を永遠のものと考えていたらしいが、そのような美は現実には存在するとは思われない。そのようにして、彼が考え込んでいった美は、最終的には何も意味をなさなく

なっている。そして、その美は一つの抽象的なアイデアだ。僕は少なくともそう感じるよ) (Shinoda 167, 169)

Published in Japan, Miller's interview reveals an alternate and more critical perspective arguably missing from *Reflections*, demonstrating that Miller's previous views were toned down and underdeveloped. Ueno's lament that Miller should have hit harder with his text is justified in that, while the publisher and editor praised the work, the lasting impact of the article has clearly demonstrated its bluntness.

- 26 The approach by which Miller addresses Mishima's life and final actions demonstrates a desire to avoid judging or commending his violent ending. Occasionally, evaluations of Miller's piece seem misconstrued or overemphasized, suggesting he was exalting Mishima for doing "a great service to Japan" (Wolfe 47), or that Miller "was the only person to directly undertake [the idea of] 'Mishima' as an issue, as his own ideological challenge" (Okamoto 264). Others have assumed that "the tendency to eulogize Mishima, to consider him a kind of prophet or messiah who heralded a certain tragedy, a loss of some of the more vital, sensuous characteristics of Japanese culture, is clearly the theme of Miller's book" (Morgan 71). Occasionally, a summation of the text is given that would have suited Miller's aspirations, as when Mishima scholar Saeki Shōichi wrote in 1976, "Miller accepts Mishima's self-determination with surprising candor. He acknowledges Mishima's arguments and actions with a magnanimity that few Japanese ever have (ミラーは、三島の自決を、驚くほどの素直さで受け入れている。日本人にも少いほどの大らかさで、三島の言い分と行動を認めている)" (6). Saeki notwithstanding, other appraisals, I would argue, focus too heavily on Miller's oft-quoted opinion that Mishima dedicated himself "to his country, to Japan, first and foremost. He was a patriot in the strict sense of the word. He not only loved his country, he was prepared to sacrifice everything to save it" (1977 27). In combination with the samurai world surrounding Mishima, he was also intimately tied to the world of art; as such Miller's approach in *Reflections* echoes Ruth Benedict's observations on the samurai, who "in spite of their ready swords, developed arts of peace" (64). *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) is of course a renowned source on Japanese culture from a Western perspective, having provided Americans an overview of their wartime enemy. Benedict's predilection for samurai themes appealed to Miller's perception of the country, but it must be noted that Benedict included perspectives of American-Japanese interviewees who were recalling an older Japan, and perhaps a more romanticized motherland. Surprisingly, Miller read the book twenty years after its publication, noting the complexity interlaced throughout: "Reading [Benedict's] book, I realize how very, very little I really know about the Japanese, about their mind, their way of thinking, and so on. [...]. Consider me an ignorant Westerner who happens to love Japan and all she stands for but who will never penetrate the mystery of her ways" (Miller, 1986 62). From the opposite spectrum, a similar sentiment was endorsed by Mishima in 1970, when he suggested that Henry Scott Stokes pack up and leave, as "no foreigner could ever understand Japan" (qtd. in Scott-Stokes, 1975 24). Three years later, Miller's *Reflections* project would require him to evaluate Mishima's cult of the body, the samurai ethic, and reconsider the cultural struggles concerning the utility of the artist in both the East and West. By its conclusion, Miller, I believe, determined that Mishima's death benefited no one.

Conclusion

- 27 The text of *Reflections* has been mostly overlooked by Miller and Mishima scholars in part because he failed to secure a national publication in the United States. Essentially, when the various news giants looked at his piece, they found it lacking, too long, needing editing, or his price demand too ridiculous. Finally published through the small Capra Press in 1972, *Reflections* failed to impact readers. To increase his compensation and keep the text intact, Miller refused offers from high-profile magazines and in return lost the opportunity to widely broadcast his article. When published by Capra Press, *Reflections* missed the mark according to the *National Review*: “Unfortunately, Miller’s brief tract [...] develops a secular, humorless, indulgently self-loving Mishima who must be taught, in a dream conversation with Miller after Mishima’s death, a more cosmic, joyful feeling for life” (Crawford 1258). Released as a signed hardback limited edition of 200 copies in tandem with a 1500 issue paperback, sustained sales warranted a second edition of another 1500 prints (Shifreen and Jackson 424–25).⁴⁴ After this, *Reflections* drifted into obscurity until republished in *Sextet* in 1977, its final reincarnation.
- 28 The stunning ending for Mishima shocked the world; it impacted Japan like nothing since the traumatic conclusion of World War II (Scott-Stokes, 1985 60; Muramatsu 37). To compose “*un examen de conscience*,” Miller required research and insight into Mishima’s life and death. Even with primary and secondary sources, his Western mindset concerning Japan left him perplexed over what he sometimes considered an impenetrable culture. Reflecting similar sentiments, in a 1985 interview on *The Dick Cavett Show* (USA Network, 1985–1986), Paul Schrader, director of the controversial *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (Warner, 1985), was asked, “can the American consciousness [...] ever understand this? Can you understand it?” Schrader responds that the idea of comprehending Mishima’s act is
- sort of a misnomer [...], in that we have a tendency to say, “we can’t understand Mishima because we’re Americans.” Believe me, the Japanese do not understand him either. He is as unfathomable to them, perhaps more so, because they feel they should understand him. We just assume we can’t; and maybe, therefore, we can understand him better. (The Dick Cavett Show, 1985 00:03:35–00:04:03)⁴⁵
- Miller does not claim to comprehend Mishima—exemplified by the numerous questions he asks the deceased author—but he sought to better understand himself, observing that “his death, the manner and purpose of it, caused me to question some of the things I valued or cherished, caused me, in brief, to reexamine my own conscience” (1977 29). Considering that Miller neither visited Japan nor met Mishima, the “*examen de conscience*” provides an avenue through which Miller could uniquely approach Mishima.
- 29 From a Western perspective, *Reflections* likely stands as the most overpriced publication for its period, with the *Shuukan Post* footing a bill that no other publisher would match. Miller knowingly wrote outside his element: his limited knowledge of Mishima was compounded by the fact that he intentionally weakened his voice, perhaps aiming to meet the expectations of a gossip magazine readership. As a result, the toned-down final version of *Reflections* has yet to find a footing in discussions surrounding Mishima. Perhaps Miller did not realize the extent to which Mishima was seeking international acclaim, and instead of committing harakiri for his country, Mishima created this melodrama for the western world—for which Miller fell hook, line, and sinker. The

combination of two high-profile writers in Japan made for a lucrative combination for the *Shuukan Post*, justifying their price for the manuscript. Yet, Miller's "too polite" essay, drawn from a variety of secondary sources, has failed to resonate beyond the temporal fascination surrounding Mishima's dramatic end. (For that matter, the work of both Miller and Mishima have nearly drifted out of modern memory.) Honda Yasunori, the foremost scholar on Miller in Japan, considers that "the two seem to be too far apart from each other culturally. The one put himself on the cross (*The Rosy Crucifixion*). The other harakiried with a sword, trying to represent the Japanese people."⁴⁶ These two polarities, Honda intimates, cannot be easily conjoined, and for this reason, *Reflections* feels ineffectual. Insisting that the manuscript remain unedited and in its original form also eliminated certain publication venues; probably, Miller deemed himself justified in such demands, as the Japanese publisher had accepted the piece at face value. Ueno's warning to avoid the Japanese gossip magazines ultimately proved true; in the end, Miller reconsidered his reflection on Mishima and determined that, for himself, the ultimate pursuit remained the enjoyment of life.

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NOTES

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2. As I will discuss, the price paid by the Japanese weekly magazine led Miller to demand that he receive a similar outlay from a Western publication—none of the magazines Miller approached came close to the Japanese payment.
3. There was no public comment by Tennessee Williams, who, along with Oliver Evans, had visited Mishima a few months before his death (see Evans, "A Pleasant").
4. It is this author's opinion that the supposed meeting in 1960 between Mishima and Miller in Reinbek, Germany at the Rowohlt publishing house never took place. First reported in a German newspaper, it was then taken up by Japanese newspapers. When Miller learned he had apparently met Mishima, he was flabbergasted and confessed no memory of the meeting. Additionally, Robert MacGregor, who knew Mishima, confirmed Miller's doubts; MacGregor met Mishima in New York City and had discussed the possibility of Mishima and Miller meeting in Japan. Since the Japanese newspapers had publicized the event, Miller intimated in *Reflections* that a meeting had indeed taken place in Germany. Miller to Robert MacGregor, 20 February 1971. Folder 75 of 81; MacGregor to Miller, 2 March 1971. Folder 75 of 81, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records, circa 1932-1997 (MS Am 2077 1152). Houghton Library, Harvard University. Hereafter: NDPC, Harvard.
5. Miller was able to publish in book format a French version combined with a few other essays, but *Reflections* never did see mass media publication outside of Japan.
6. Shiro Hayashi was managing editor of *Shuukan Post* and had visited Miller in mid-February. Upon returning to Tokyo, he wrote: "I hope to get your manuscript which we talked about, as soon as it will be available." Hayashi to Miller. 26 February 1971. Box 76, Folder 1, Henry Miller Papers (Collection 110). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Hereafter: HMP, UCLA.
7. *Henry Miller and James Laughlin: Selected Letters* (1996), edited by George Wickes, does not include this letter; its absence is unfortunate as it contains valuable information about Miller's interest in Mishima. Miller to MacGregor, 20 February 1971. Folder 75 of 81, NDPC, Harvard.
8. This is not to suggest that the entirety of Mishima's literary output would have provided Miller valuable insight. Mishima also wrote cheap, mass produced novels for quick sales and easy money. Due to this limited access to Mishima's works, *Reflections* stands as a very different and less intimate meditation on a fellow author, especially compared to Miller's more extensive works on D.H. Lawrence, Balzac, and Rimbaud. A literary connection with Mishima is clearly lacking in *Reflections*.
9. Wolfe agrees with Miller's charge that Mishima was incapable of laughing at himself, and therefore, Wolfe surmises, Mishima could not open his heart (187).
10. Rankin correctly perceives that Miller's perspective on Mishima is "less admiring" (3).
11. Miller biographers Jay Martin, Mary Dearborn, Robert Ferguson, Erica Jong, Kathryn Winslow, and Arthur Hoyle ignore the text or make only passing reference to it.

12. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know what conversations went on in Miller's house in Pacific Palisades. We do know that Miller's Japanese wife, Hoki Tokuda, provided her opinion about Mishima (see Kiakis).
13. Miller to James Laughlin, 8 February 1955. Folder 37 of 81, NDPC, Harvard.
14. Kubo, Sadajiro to Miller. 1 May 1957. Box 28, Folder 3, HMP, UCLA.
15. Only a handful of other Mishima's books had been printed in English by the end of 1970. These included: *Confessions of a Mask* (New Directions, 1958); *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (Random House, 1959); *After the Banquet* (Random House, 1963); *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories* (New Directions, 1966); *Madame de Sade* (Grove/Atlantic, 1967); and, *A Thirst for Love* (Random House, 1969), according to the website, *Books In Print*.
16. Miller to MacGregor, 20 February 1971. Folder 75 of 81, NDPC, Harvard.
17. Miller's wife Hoki Tokuda brought him a Japanese version of Mishima's final novel, *The Decay of the Angel*. Unable to read Japanese, he asked Tokuda to read the book and provide an overview.
18. For more on the relationship between Miller and Ueno, see Arnold.
19. Ueno to Miller. 11 December 1970. Box 71, Folder 7, HMP, UCLA.
20. Ueno to Miller. 8 February 1971. Box 74, Folder 2, HMP, UCLA.
21. Ueno to Miller. 11 March 1971. Box 74, Folder 2, HMP, UCLA.
22. Ueno to Miller. 8 February 1971. Box 74, Folder 2, HMP, UCLA.
23. Ueno to Miller. 11 December 1971. Box 74, Folder 2, HMP, UCLA.
24. Miller was aware of the Japanese gossip magazines, as he had been subjected to years of what he sometimes considered to be slanderous articles concerning various aspects of his love life. Ueno to Miller. 3 March 1971. Box 74, Folder 2, HMP, UCLA.
25. Ueno to Miller. 31 March 1971. Box 74, Folder 2, HMP, UCLA.
26. Miller was also reading the rather sensational pieces in *The New York Times*, written by the Japanese correspondent, Ako Takashi.
27. Miller to MacGregor, 20 February 1971. Folder 75 of 81, NDPC, Harvard.
28. Mishima had dedicated himself to bodybuilding, telling his former trainer that "there ought to be a strict line between what you write and how you live. No matter how unquotidian or radical your writing may be, there is no reason for your daily life to be unhealthy or degenerate" (qtd. in Inose and Sato 261).
29. Shimano was removed from authority with the New York Zendo Shobo-Ji, as he had been continuously accused of decades of sexual abuse directly connected to his position of instructor of Buddhist teachings (Genzlinger).
30. Eido Tai Shimano, "Yukio Mishima." MSS 099, F757, Collection of Henry Miller's *Reflections on the Life of Mishima* documents, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware. (Author's Note: The library has Miller's work mistitled.)
31. Another section attracting Miller's attention was Shimano's belief that "Mishima, in common with most people nowadays, wanted to change the world, not outwardly, but most basically; that is to say, by enlightening the people as to the fact that life will continue again and again. He offered his body and mind to all beings for this purpose. This will be proved soon by his rebirth with a long scar in his Hara, or lower abdomen." Shimano's strong belief of Mishima's reincarnation, based heavily on his interpretation of *The Sea of Fertility* tetralogy, seems to have encouraged Miller to believe that Mishima believed his death not be final.
32. In his reply to Miller, Evans wrote, "I too was puzzled by parts of *Sun and Steel*: the idea of perfecting the body so that it will be 'worthy' of destruction is not one that the Western mind grasps very easily." Evans also mentions that he had recently met and heard stories about Mishima from Christopher Isherwood, whom he claims knew Mishima better than Williams. Evans to Miller. No date. Box 70, Folder 7, HMP, UCLA.
33. Miller kept delaying in sending the piece as he was essentially trying to create a bidding war. Before sending it to *Esquire*, Miller sent his work to *Harper's Magazine*; the editor, Barbara Kerr,

telegraphed Miller praising *Reflections* but noted that it was too long and had to be edited (concerning the “heads rolling” section). *Harper's* offered Miller \$1500 for the piece. After rejecting *Harper's* offer, Miller turned to *Mademoiselle* but found a similar refusal from managing editor Mary Cantwell, who lamented that due to the length and Miller's restrictions on editing the piece, it could not be published. “I would have liked very much to have bought part II,” Cantwell wrote, “but I'm aware of your proscription against it being cut in any way.” Lish, Gordon to Miller. 29 March 1971. Box 73, Folder 6, HMP, UCLA; Kerr, Barbara to Miller. 3 July 1971. Box 76, Folder 3, HMP, UCLA; Cantwell, Mary to Miller. 10 August 1971. Box 73, Folder 13, HMP, UCLA.

34. Eisenberg, Lee to Miller. 3 September 1971. Box 73, Folder 6, HMP, UCLA.

35. Eisenberg, Lee to Miller. 24 September 1971. Box 73, Folder 6, HMP, UCLA.

36. Tobita to Oliver Evans, quoted in Evans to Miller. 13 November 1971. Box 73, Folder 6, HMP, UCLA.

37. Tobita and Hayashi had obvious reasons to provide only positive feedback to Miller. Tobita to Miller. 9 December 1971. Box 9, Folder 109, Henry Miller Papers (YCAL MSS 472). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Hereafter: HMP, Yale.

38. Miller to Tobita, carbon copy. 12 December 1971. Box 9, Folder 107, HMP, Yale.

39. During the trial, the three defendants were charged with, among other crimes, “murder by request” (Oka 19).

40. Tokuda, Rokuro to Miller. 13 January 1972. Box 78, Folder 1, HMP, UCLA.

41. The existence of this translation was previously unknown and was only discovered after Ueno's executive secretary, Nakui Yoshiaki (名久井良明), located them in Ueno's materials and sent them to me.

42. “Notes on the death of Mishima,” by Henry Miller, Winter 1971. Translated into Japanese by Ueno Shōri. Translated into English by Patrick Palmer. Personal collection of Nakui Yoshiaki.

43. Miller to Ueno, 9 June 1972. Personal collection of Ueno Shōri.

44. The publisher, Noel Young, wrote Miller in February 1973 that sales on the east coast were picking up and therefore a second edition was warranted. Young to Miller. 29 March 1973. Noel Young / Capra Press Collection. (Printers Mss 46). Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

45. John Wilson provides an engaging examination of Schrader's film (see Wilson).

46. Honda is referring to Miller's semi-autobiographical trilogy, *Sexus* (1949), *Plexus* (1952), and *Nexus* (1959). Honda, Yasunori. Personal correspondence. 3 July 2020.

ABSTRACTS

In early 1971, Henry Miller composed *Reflections on the Death of Mishima*, an essay in which he attempted to formulate his opinions concerning the death of Mishima Yukio on 25 November 1970. Since the text has been greatly overlooked by both Miller and Mishima scholars, uncovering Miller's composition process and the Japanese publication history through the use of archival materials will encourage a reevaluation Miller's search for understanding concerning Mishima's actions. I argue that Miller set out to formulate a meaningful reflection spurred by the events of the suicide, perhaps achieving his personal goal; to do so, he put great effort into gathering information sources from both Japan and the United States. What is revealed through

this research is that the wide-ranging opinions from both Japan and the West concerning Mishima's seppuku had a calculable impact on the construction of *Reflections*.

Au début de l'année 1971, Henry Miller composa *Reflections on the Death of Mishima*, un essai dans lequel il tente de formuler une opinion concernant la mort de Mishima, survenue le 25 novembre 1970. Le texte a été largement ignoré par la critique sur Miller comme sur Mishima. Cet article s'appuie sur un travail d'archive afin de mettre en lumière le processus de composition de cet essai de Miller et l'histoire de sa publication au Japon. Miller a déployé d'impressionnants efforts pour collecter l'information autour de cet événement, tant au Japon qu'aux États-Unis. Cet essai montre comment le suicide de Mishima a suscité une réflexion déterminante qui a peut-être permis à Miller d'atteindre ses propres objectifs. Ce que Miller a tiré de cette recherche autour du *seppuku* de Mishima a eu un impact notoire sur la construction de *Reflections*.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Miller (Henry), Mishima (Yukio), seppuku, samurai, recherche archivistique

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