



Spring Snow

Yukio Mishima , Michael Gallagher (Translator)

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Tokyo, 1912. The closed world of the ancient aristocracy is being breached for the first time by outsiders - rich provincial families, a new and powerful political and social elite.

Kiyoaki has been raised among the elegant Ayakura family - members of the waning aristocracy - but he is not one of them. Coming of age, he is caught up in the tensions between old and new, and his feelings for the exquisite, spirited Satoko, observed from the sidelines by his devoted friend Honda. When Satoko is engaged to a royal prince, Kiyoaki realises the magnitude of his passion.

Spring Snow Details

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From Reader Review Spring Snow for online ebook

Ryan says

Once you start reading Mishima, and becoming absorbed with his characters, you are caught in a web that resembles the web he reveals his own characters are enmeshed in. His characters are so tragic, yet so ordinary; so privileged, yet so doomed; so foolish, yet so much more introspective than you. *Spring Snow* was one of the best books I have ever read. Mishima is like a surgeon; the tip of his needle or scalpel so fine, so pointed, that he can isolate the most fleeting, awkward, and yet noble emotion, gesture, or thought, and hold it up to you like a jewel, and allow you to view it from all sides and savor it. And he does not hold these gems up to show you how ugly they are; what is so beautiful about his writing is that even the ugliest, basest, most "human", emotion, he gives nobility and honor, so that his characters seem deific, holy... like we should see ourselves. You become his fools, and you enjoy letting their hurt become yours because you have become more honest, and more truly yourself through the process of reading him... An exquisite book, haunting.

Mohammed says

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Bettie? says

Description: *Tokyo, 1912. The closed world of the ancient aristocracy is being breached for the first time by*

outsiders - rich provincial families, a new and powerful political and social elite.

Kiyoaki has been raised among the elegant Ayakura family - members of the waning aristocracy - but he is not one of them. Coming of age, he is caught up in the tensions between old and new, and his feelings for the exquisite, spirited Satoko, observed from the sidelines by his devoted friend Honda. When Satoko is engaged to a royal prince, Kiyoaki realises the magnitude of his passion.

The first book in The Sea of Fertility tetralogy. Translated from the Japanese by Michael Gallagher.

Opening: WHEN CONVERSATION at school turned to the Russo-Japanese War, Kiyoaki Matsugae asked his closest friend, Shigekuni Honda, how much he could remember about it.

I have no yearning to read anything other than this first book to get a sense of the author and his politics, and just why he felt that to go back to the mediaeval way of the Samurai was ::a::good::thing::

The particular reason to read this now is that it is Spring - and snow is falling.

As we move through the story there are divinations of things to come from the Dream Diaries, and a black dog at the top of a waterfall, an occurrence which is said to augur badly. Yes, many carrots of things to come further down the line.

Yukio Mishima started weight training in 1955. His rigorous weekly regimes continued until his death. Mishima also became an avid and skillful practitioner of kendo. Despite his earlier flight from military service, Yukio Mishima would be known for his political support for a re-militarized Japan. Yukio Mishima became a part of the Ground Self Defense Force and went through the training process in 1967. In 1968, Yukio Mishima uses his reputation and his martial training to found the Tatenokai or the Shield Society. This paramilitary organization swore their loyalty to the abstract notion of the Voices of the Heroic Dead. Mishima supported Japanese Nationalism but was greatly angered by Emperor Hirohito's renunciation of imperial divinity.

In 1958, Yukio Mishima married Yoko Sugiyama. The following year, Yoko gave birth to a daughter named Noriko and four years later Yoko gave birth to a son named Ichiro. Yukio Mishima frequented gay bars. But many people (including Mishima's widow) have tried to obfuscate the fact of his homosexual activities. This obfuscation has failed to prevent many of Mishima's male lovers from coming forward. Yukio Mishima's children have joined in the effort to prevent Mishima's full sexuality from becoming apparent by suing people who acknowledge these relationships.

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Gabrielle says

4 and a half stars.

When I read a translated book, I'm always very conscious that what I'm reading is not necessarily what the author meant to write: I'm reading a book that's very much like what the author wrote but not really the same. I have no idea what Mishima's book is like in the original Japanese, but if this translation is anything like it, the beauty of the prose in Japanese must be devastating.

The story of Kioyaki and Satoko is, in and of itself, not remarkable: forbidden loves, especially in highly hierarchical and ritualized society, such as Imperial Japan on the cusp of modernization is nothing new, nor are bildungsroman about the often painful transition between boy and man. But the prose! The delicate, poetic and incredibly evocative prose turns this story into a dream-like journey in 1912 Japan, a world fascinated with the West but still holding on to deeply rooted traditions.

It has to be read slowly, to really let oneself bask into the elegant melancholy of Mishima's writing. It is dense at times, but so sensual and crisp that you forget how silly Kioyaki and Satoko are. They are both so beautiful and so spoiled, selfish and conceited that you wish someone would give them a good slap or two until they snapped out of ruining each others' lives. But Mishima writes them in a way that makes it impossible not to want to know what happens to them. It comes as no surprise that there is tragedy at the end of the path they follow. But what an interesting path!

And as gorgeous as the writing is, it reminded me of a really pleasant but too liberally applied perfume: it could get a bit overwhelming, and then I'd have to read the passage again to make sure I knew what was going on.

I will be looking for the rest of the "Sea of Fertility" tetralogy, which follows Kioyaki's friend Honda. The deep friendship between the two young men leads Honda to believe he meets successive reincarnations of Kioyaki and tries to save him from his karma. If the other three books are as good as "Spring Snow", they are more than worth the time!

Ahmad Sharabiani says

??? [Haru no Yuki] = Spring Snow (The Sea of Fertility, Book 1), Yukio Mishima

Spring Snow (??? Haru no Yuki) is a novel by Yukio Mishima, the first in his Sea of Fertility tetralogy. It was published serially in Shinch? from 1965 to 1967, and then in book form in 1969. The novel is set in the early years of the Taish? period with the reign of the Emperor Taish?, and is about the relationship between Kiyoaki Matsugae, the son of a rising nouveau-riche family, and Satoko Ayakura, the daughter of an aristocratic family fallen on hard times. Shigekuni Honda, a schoolfriend of Kiyoaki's, is the main witness to the events. The novel's themes centre on the conflicts in Japanese society caused by westernization in the early 20th century.

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Hakan says

bahar karlar?, japonya'n?n yirminci yüzy?l?n? anlatan bereket denizi dörtlemesinin ilk roman?. 1912 y?l?nda ba?l?yor: 45 y?ll?k imparator meiji döneminin bitti?i, geleneksel de?erlere ba?l? soylulara kar?? yeni bir zengin s?n?f?n?n yükseldi?i, bat?l?la?man?n h?z kazand??? bir dönem. bu dönemi bir a?k hikayesi etraf?nda okuyoruz ve fakat herhangi bir tarihi roman okuma deneyiminden farklı? bir taraf? var bu okuman?n. roman?n yazar? mi?ima'n?n bat?l?la?maya kar?? radikal muhalefet yürüttü?ünü ve bereket denizi dörtlemesini tamamlar tamamlamaz arkada?lar?yla birlikte bir askeri birli?i i?gal edip japonya'n?n geleneksel de?erlerine dönmesi için haz?rlad??? manifestoyu okuduktan sonra seppuku yaparak intihar etti?ini biliyoruz. roman?n meselesinin yazar?n?n hayat?n?n meselesi oldu?u çarp?c? bir durum söz konusu.

soru ?u belki: mi?ima taraf oldu?u, hayat?n? ortaya koydu?u meseleyi yazar kimli?iyle ve bir roman çerçevesi içinde nas?l anlat?yor? cevap: ?a??rt?c? derecede incelik ve zarafetle. incelik ve zarafet içinde müthi? bir yo?unluk ve güçle. mi?ima'n?n inceli?i, zarafeti asla basit/hafif bir roman yapm?yor bahar karlar?'n?. bilakis öfkeli, ?iddetli, sert bir roman bahar karlar?. fakat mi?ima do?rudan yazarak göstermiyor bunu. mi?ima hisssettiriyor, sezdiriyor. ilginç bir nokta mesela, hikaye içinde bir erdem olarak zarafeti geleneksel de?erlere ba?l? soylu s?n?fa ait ki?ilerin karakterlerinde, kabal???-do?rudan??? ise yeni zengin s?n?fa ait kahramanlar?'n karakterlerinde görmek. bir di?er nokta hikaye içindeki sona gidi?le, mi?ima'n?n kendi hayat?ndaki sona gidi?teki paralellik. dörtlemenin tamam?n?n var?k nedeni, bu yaz?nsal prova belki de, bu yaz?nsal prova da yazar?n ?iddetli sonunun inceli?i.

sonuç olarak incelikli, ayn? zamanda güclü-yo?un anlat?m?, karakter derinlikleri, do?aya bak??taki ?ihsellik, hikayeyi büyüt?n, geni?leten detaylar?yla birlikte bahar karlar?, kendi içinde bütünlü?e sahip oldu?u dü?ünürse, ba?yap?t seviyesinde bir roman. ayr?ca Japonya tarihi ve kültürüne ili?kin sahici bir okumaya olanak veriyor. sahicien kas?t, mi?ima'n?n günümüzdeki ço?u yazar gibi ülkesinin kültürünü basitle?tip hafifle?tirerek, ?irinle?tirerek bat?l? okura satmak gibi bir amac?n?n olmamas?. her Japon yazar?n yazd??? romana Japon roman? denemeyece?ini biliyoruz maalesef.

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Michael Finocchiaro says

It is hard to put words to the beauty and melancholy that Mishima pours into this first of his great tetralogy. The symbolism, the imagery, the characters - everything here is drawn with a fine pencil and eye for detail. The characters reappear in the following books but not as you might expect. This is one of the great monuments of Japanese literature in the 20th C (my other favourite is Soseki's I am a Cat) and it is truly a pleasure to read and savour.

brian says

the first in mishima's tetralogy and, so far, the best (i'm in the middle of the third). on its own, *Spring Snow* is

easily one of the most tender love stories i've read -- but it cannot be considered on its own: as honda watches a friend reincarnated several times over the span of several novels, it all adds up to even more than the sum of its extraordinary parts. in the USA, this'd play out as gimmick; in japan (shinto, buddhism, etc.) it is the assumption. an exploration of history, the philosophy of history, buddhism, transmigration of souls, right-wing fanaticism, nationalism, america's influence over the east, loneliness, memory, love, etc... the depth and breadth of this series cannot be overstated.

oh yeah... mishima promised that after completing the fourth and final book of the series, he'd kill himself. the day he handed in the manuscript, he rounded up his crew of right-wing militants, forcefully took over a government building, gave a speech to the military (he plots this all out in Runaway Horses, the second of the tetralogy), and then killed himself. fuck yeah!

Jeffrey Keeten says

Yukio Mishima felt the Japanese government needed to return to a system based on the samurai code. He was descended from samarais and believed that this code, advocating complete command of one's body and soul combined with a complete loyalty to the emperor, was necessary for Japan to return to prominence. He formed his own army in 1970 and attempted a coup d'état. With a few friends he overpowered the commandant of the Ichigaya Camp — the Tokyo headquarters of the Eastern Command of Japan's Self-Defense Forces and tied the commandant to a chair. Mishima then stepped onto a balcony outside the commandant's office and gave an impassioned speech to the government troops to join his cause. He was jeered and mocked off the balcony.

He returned to the commandant's office and committed seppuku, a ritual suicide. The friend he had chosen to slice his head from his body at the end of the ritual could not complete his responsibilities and another friend stepped in to end his pain. Mishima had been planning his suicide for almost a year. For those with a more gruesome bent you can find pictures of his severed head on the internet.

Mishima was only 45 on November 25th, 1970. He had been a successful actor, kendo master, and of course writer. Mishima wrote 40 novels, 18 plays, 20 books of short stories, and at least 20 books of essays, one libretto, as well as one film. Like Fitzgerald, he dashed off a lot of work for quick cash, but even if those inferior works are discarded, he still had an impressive body of work for a man who died so young. He had just finished the final volume in The Sea of Fertility tetralogy, of which *Spring Snow* is the first, before his suicide.

Spring Snow is a novel of pride, misplaced loyalty, blackmail, intrigue, lust, selfishness, sacrifice, and misery. It is the story of star crossed lovers, steadfast friends, political mishaps, and conniving servants. The setting is 1912 Tokyo in the inner circle of imperial court. Our hero is Kiyoaki, who was born so beautiful he stirred the blood of women from 8 to 80. He was a young man of 19 whom women wanted and men wanted to be like. Those people too enamored with him soon found themselves rebuffed. Honda, a fellow classmate of Kiyoaki observed this tendency and modified his approach to Kiyoaki forsaking fawning for aloofness. "*He knew only too well how Kiyoaki reserved his keenest displeasure for any excessive show of friendship.*" Now his name is HONDA not HONDO.

It must be the fact that Hondo was one of my favorite John Wayne movies when I was a kid combined with the fact that I really liked Honda, by far my favorite character in the book, that I kept changing his name in my head to Hondo.

Kiyoaki as a young lad of 13 was asked to participate in a ritual ceremony that brought him in close proximity to the princess. He missteps and disrupts the trail of her ermine coat.

"Princess Kasuga's lavish use of French perfume extended to her train, and its fragrance overpowered the musky odor of incense. Some way down the corridor, Kiyoaki stumbled for a moment, inadvertently tugging at the train. The princess turned her head slightly, and, as a sign that she was not at all annoyed, smiled gently at the youthful offender. Her gesture went unnoticed; body perfectly erect in that fractional turn, she had allowed Kiyoaki a glimpse of a corner of her mouth. At that moment, a single wisp of hair slipped over her clear white cheek, and out of the fine-drawn corner of an eye a smile flashed in a spark of black fire. But the pure line of her nose did not move. It was as if nothing had happened...this fleeting angle of the Princess's face--too slight to be called a profile--made Kiyoaki feel as if he had seen a rainbow flicker for a bare instant through a prism of pure crystal."

This scene stays with Kiyoaki for the rest of his life. He considered it one of the most defining moments of his life, which makes it all the more inexplicable why it takes him so long to realize the extraordinary beauty of his life time friend Satoko. Only after his friends at school see her and react extravagantly to her charms does Kiyoaki for the first time see her as a woman and not as an annoying child. She is acerbic, sarcastic, intelligent, and head over heels in love with Kiyoaki. Her wit and his pride contribute to the continued cross purposes of their relationship. Honda proves himself time and time again helping Kiyoaki with insane plans to get unsupervised time with Satoko. He rejects her and then wants her more than ever. *"His own heart seemed to him to be much like an arrow stripped of the flashing white feathers that gave it direction."*

The minor characters provide twisty plot turns that add inspiring flavor to the plot. Jaw dropping, unexpected moments of blackmail with a dash of spicy intrigue keep the pages turning even when the main characters are off the stage. Beautiful descriptive passages, bits of Zen, and an ending that Shakespeare would certainly approve of lead me to say **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

William1.2 says

Set near Tokyo in 1912. In *Spring Snow* Kiyoaki Matsugae is sent as a child be raised on the estate of a Count where he learns all the worst habits of a decadent court. He is slothful, he preens in the knowledge of his superior looks. When 18 years of age he is so self-involved—the familiar disaffectedness of many Mishima protagonists—that even when kissing the woman who loves him he thinks only of how *he* feels. He's an affected asshole who takes a conscious pleasure in cruelty.

This . . . was further proof of the hidden, savage essence of the elegance he had cultivated for so long. (p. 257)

Kiyoaki's friend is the upstanding Shigekuni Honda. He adores Kiyoaki. A hard-working young man who loses himself in thoughts of the niceties of European Natural Law and the Laws of Manu, which at the time of the action, the author tells us, were the foundation of Indian law. He also has an abiding interest in historiography, particularly how he and his peers will be viewed by future generations. This dovetails with

the theme of reincarnation which links the four books of The Sea of Fertility cycle.

The vast Matsugae estate is imposing. It is still the period of mourning for the late emperor who was called Meiji in life. So the cherry blossom festival as it turns out will be observed, though on a smaller scale than usual. An imperial prince attends with his wife and other visitors. Their route through the blossoms is girded by a red and white curtain, presumably for purposes of privacy. The Western house is filled with geishas. A platform for their cherry blossom dances is built in the garden. Later, there will be a banquet and a film shown based on a Dickens novel.

Amid it all Kiyoaki is adrift. Satoko is there in all her finery but it's somehow not enough. What is he waiting for? In thrall to his own beauty, his pride, Kiyoaki is at odds with himself, contradictory in his impulses. He is lost, no decisiveness—aside from a snowy rickshaw ride with Satoko, which was her idea—comes from him. His is a rapt passivity. Meanwhile, he stubbornly lets go of Satoko when she is courted by an imperial prince, and thinks good riddance.

Devoid of worry or annoyance, free of all anxiety, Kiyoaki at nineteen liked to see himself as a cold and supremely capable young man. He felt that he was now past some watershed in the course of his life. (p. 163)

But he isn't. Unable to read his own emotions, he takes grief for delight; his "strength of will," as he terms it, when tearing up a letter from Satoko unread, he begins to sense may be cowardice, for she is just about to marry the imperial prince. What a muddle he's in. Though an aristocrat he has known social isolation much of his life. Thus, his misreading of people and situations always in a manner that plays to his own falsely elevated sense of self worth.

Long ago he had resolved to recognize his emotions as his only guiding truth and to live his life accordingly, even if meant a deliberate aimlessness. That principle had now brought him to his present sinister feelings of joy, which seemed to be the brink of a racing plunging whirlpool. There seemed to be nothing left but to throw himself into it. (p. 177)

I won't go into Kiyoaki and Satoko's love affair or the novel's tragic denouement. Suffice it to say that Kiyoaki's comeuppance is quite a spectacle and Honda is there to puzzle over it. The book has a very long fuse. The last 200 pages are far better than the first 200. Despite this uneven start, this is the strongest Mishima novel I have ever read.

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Ailsa says

"Just as a stream returns to its normal course after a flood, Kyoaki's predilection for suffering began to reassert itself."

"At that moment she held an irresistible attraction for him... it was the lure of the forbidden, the utterly unattainable, the proscribed. He wanted her in this way and no other."

Set in Japan in 1912, after the Russo-Japanese War *Spring Snow* captures a society in flux in startlingly crisp prose.

"Beautiful, elegant, imposing, she was like a flower at its moment of perfection."

David Mitchell calls this an "austere love story", but I think Kiyoaki and Satoko's romance is secondary to Kiyoaki's preoccupation with his perception of self.

Kyoaki is a young nobleman, handsome and deeply introspective. He has everything he could ever want yet he yearns for some great purpose to devote himself to. Mulling over why Kyoaki is so annoying, I realised that my frustration stems from how alien his motivations are. The pursuit of happiness is so ingrained within me that his cultivation of beautiful melancholy and grandiosity seems shallow. All of his insurmountable problems are quasi-masochistically self made.

Having trouble marshalling my thoughts on this one. I'll return to this review later, I don't want to ramble on incomprehensibly. Suffice to say, I disliked the *experience* of reading this novel because I just wanted slap Kiyoaki the whole time. The reincarnation and laws of manu stuff was tedious as well. However, there are moments of incredible beauty and it throws up a lot of grist for the mental mill. Hmm, conflicted.

Bonnie says

Mishima, like other great writers, has a way of implanting memories in our heads, echoes of other lives. How this magic happens is a mystery but when it does, you feel somehow denser inside, more solid. *Spring Snow* left me with that feeling, of having increased my gravity and weight, with the lyrical descriptions, history, characters, ceremonies, letters, political intrigue, birds and emerald rings and emerald snakes, and silk kimonos, and more.

At its heart, this is a doomed love story, about two beautiful people - Kiyoaki Matsugae, and Satoko Ayakura - whose outward beauty match their inner turmoil.

This excerpt from Kiyoaki's dream diary is an allegory of the story...which is an allegory...within allegory,

The very night before, he had dreamed of his own coffin, made of unpainted wood. It stood in the middle of an empty room with large windows, and outside, the pre-dawn darkness was shading to a deep blue; it was filled with the sound of birdsong.

A young woman clung to the coffin, her long black hair trailing from her drooping head, her slender shoulders wracked with sobs. He wanted to see her face but could make out no more than her pale, graceful forehead with its delicate peak of black hair.

The coffin was half covered with a leopard-skin bordered in pearls. The first muted glow of the dawn flickered on the row of jewels. Instead of funeral incense, a scent of Western perfume hung over the room with the fragrance of sun-ripened fruit. Kiyoaki seemed to be watching this from a great height, though he was convinced that his body lay inside the coffin.

But sure as he was, he still felt the need to see it there by way of confirmation. However, like a mosquito in the morning light, his wings lost all power and ceased beating in mid-air; he was utterly incapable of looking inside the nailed-down coffin lid. And then, as his frustration grew more and more intense, he woke up.

And Satoko,

...her words had a cold, proud glitter that could not tolerate the intrusion of a third party. In her own mind, she had fashioned their sin into a tiny, brilliant, crystal palace in which she and Kiyoaki could live free from the world around them. A crystal palace so tiny that it would balance on the palm of one's hand, so tiny that no one else could fit in. Transformed for a fleetingly brief instant, she and Kiyoaki had been able to enter it and now they were spending their last few moments there, observed with extraordinary clarity in all their minute detail by someone standing just outside.

There is a movie, but from the preview it seems to have only caught the surface. But still...

???

Spring Snow is a masterpiece - or at least the beginning of one, as it is the first in a cycle of four novels called the *Sea of Fertility*. I hope that the other books are as good as this one, but it's going to be a hard act to follow.

Tristan says

"Oddly enough, living only for one's emotions, like a flag obedient to the breeze, demands a way of life that

makes one balk at the natural course of events, for this implies being altogether subservient to nature. The life of the emotions detests all constraints, whatever their origin, and thus, ironically enough, is apt eventually to fetter its own instinctive sense of freedom."

- Yukio Mishima, Spring Snow

After finishing this supreme piece of fiction (the first of the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility*), I had the irresistible urge to revisit Gore Vidal's 1971 essay *The Death of Mishima* published about 8 months after the Japanese author had performed seppuku following a failed coup d'état attempt. It was this essay which prompted me to seek out the work of Mishima. A certain passage greatly struck me, and succinctly explained just what it is about Mishima's sensibility that manages to evoke such a strong reaction in me :

"Yet Mishima wanted a life of the flesh, of action, divorced from words. Some interpreted this to mean that he dreamed of becoming a sort of warlord, restoring to Japan its ancient military virtues. But I think Mishima was after something much simpler: the exhaustion of the flesh in physical exercise, in bouts of love, in such adventures as becoming a private soldier for a few weeks in his middle age or breaking the sound barrier with a military jet. Certainly Mishima did not have a political mind. He was a Romantic Artist in a very fin de siècle French way. But instead of deranging the senses through drugs, Mishima tried to lose his conscious mind (his art) through the use and worship of his own flesh and that of others. Finally, rather than face the slow bitter dissolution of the incarnate self, he chose to die."

It is this desperate longing for a renewed sense of -and respect for- masculinity in all its facets that makes Mishima such an intriguing cultural figure. After Japan's humiliating defeat in WW II the country was forced to metaphorically castrate itself, and over the last couple of decades the Western powers in a lesser degree have as well, but in that case it came about through a series of sociocultural shifts.

Spring Snow of course has a lot more themes on offer. In that respect it is quite a dense read, but one that is greatly aided by Mishima's richly lyrical, sensuous prose. Michael Gallagher must be commended for this brilliant translation, for I felt deprived of none of its intricacies. I was constantly taken aback by Mishima's flawless portrayals of distinctive, unforgettable characters and their emotional states. While quite a traditional writer, he is incredibly meticulous, like a Japanese Nabokov.

Part historical document, part philosophical/spiritual meditation, part love story (in fact two love stories, if you count Kyoaki and Honda's incredibly moving friendship), it is difficult not to find something to derive pleasure from in *Spring Snow*. In this regard I consider it a nigh perfect springboard for further exploration of Japanese culture during this era. It is simply fascinating, and almost challenges its foreign reader to delve deeper.

If I'd have to hazard a guess, I predict me finishing the entire tetralogy will enhance this first, immensely gratifying tasting even more. How fortunate a discovery, this. Pure joy.

Deniz Balc? says

Ba?yap?t!!!

Uzun zamand?r okurken bu kadar etkilendi?im bir kitap hat?rlam?yorum. Yukio Mi?ima benim için en özel

yazarlardan bir tanesi. O yüzden eserleri yava?ça ve üzerinde çok dü?ünerek okumay? seviyorum. Buna ra?men tekrar okumak için yerinmeyece?im isimlerin ba??nda geliyor. Kawabata'n?n lirizmi Japon Edebiyat?n?n zirvesi gibi lans edilse de; bence Japon Edebiyat?n?n zirvesi Mi?ima'd?r. ?lk kitap Bahar Karlar?'ndan anlad??m üzere de, yazar?nda en iyi i?leri olarak gördü?ü Bereket Denizi Dörtlemesi, bu zirvenin tepe noktas?n? olu?turuyor.

Mi?ima sadece yazd?klar? ile de?il, insan olarak yapt?klar? ve dü?ündükleri ile de halen tart??lan bir yazar. Ancak bununla yazd?klar?n? sentezlemesi ola?anüstü. "Bahar Karlar?" yazar?n birçok ?eye bak?? aç?s?n? gözler önüne seriyor. Asl?nda hayat?n?n son döneminde olgunla?t?rd??? intihar?n?n tasar?s?n? bir nevi romanda alttan alttan belli ediyor. Çok keskin dü?ünceleri olan yazarlar?n, karakterleri ile; ölümünden sonra özde?le?tirilmesi, bence yazar?n ya?arken fark edilmemi? güçlü karakterine i?aret ediyor. Mi?ima bunun en büyük örne?i.

Kitap Meiji Dönemi sonrası?, Taisho Dönemin de geçen bir a?k öyküsünü anlat?yor. Ön planda a?k öyküsü olsa da arka planda Japon halk?na sert ele?tiriler getiriliyor. Binlerce y?ll?k bir kültür uygarl???n?n, bat? etkisindeki yozla?mas? en güçlü olarak kendini Taisho Döneminde göstermi?ti. Bu da 1911 -1926 y?llar? civar?n? kaps?yor. Öyküde bu aral?ka geçiyor. Mi?ima toplumun daha çok üst kesimindeki yozlu?u ve sayg?s?zl??? ayr?nt?lar? ile ortaya koyuyor. Mi?ima'nin bat? ele?tirisi Cuniçiro Tanizaki'nin gibi de?il. Ate?li bir ?ekilde Japon köklerine ve siyasal ideolojisine ba?l? olan Mi?ima, kültürel ve üstünkörü bir endi?eden çok tözs?l, tinsel bir endi?e duyuyor. Endi?e de?il anksiyetik bir saptan? dememiz daha do?ru olabilir. Bunu edebiyat d???ndaki yaz?nlar? ve filmlerinde de görmek mümkün. Fa?i?tlikle suçlanan yazar?n; ideolojini alg?layabilmek için japon geleneklerine ve tarihine göre bir empati kurmak laz?m. Buda ülkenin bütün kodlar?na hakim olmadan çok zor.

Karakter Honda'n?n baz? diyaloglar?nda Mi?ima'n?n filozof taraf?n? görmekte mümkün. Doktrinlere bak?? aç?s? ve bunu öznelle?tirmesi beni özellikle en çok etkileyen k?s?mlar oldu. Sheaskpearevari bir merkezi olan öykünün, trajik biçimde sonland?r?ld???: okuyucuya gösterilirken, asl?nda arkada yok olan bir uygarl???n can çeki?mesini anlat?r? gibidir Mi?ima.

Üzerine çok ?ey söylenebilecek bir roman. Kesinlikle geleneksel Japon romanc?l???n?n bana göre zirvesi!

5/5

Jr Bacdayan says

A book can be either of two things: a key to open locked doors which lead to unique experiences we have not encountered or are impossible for us to attain; while the other is a mirror to show us who we are or remind us of ourselves and the past we have not forgotten. One stirs excitement, the other nostalgia. This time it took the shape of the latter. The book served as a mirror to me, reminding me of a befuddled young man blind to the workings of his heart, prone to exaggerating the simple nuances in the actions of a woman devoted to him, a woman he doubted because of childish fears. But I am not here to talk of myself, I am here because the pain it stirred in me forces me to write.

Kiyoaki, a beautiful yet lethargic young man, is at odds with his equally beautiful childhood friend Satoko. An inexperienced boy when it comes to the desire inside him, he constantly misinterprets and confuses the actions of the young woman who is thoroughly taken with him. His melancholy attitude doesn't help his cause and he loathes balefully in the estranged pool of his own work. That is until he learns of Satoko's

engagement with a prince, thus the object of his hatred and bewilderment is snatched from him, suddenly out of reach. It is such a curious thing that when something we have ignored for so long is suddenly unavailable to us, we find it infinitely more desirable. The fickle human heart with its itinerant impulses shifts its gear and so the idea of unattainability forces us to acknowledge the taken for granted, the sudden spotlight makes the dull suddenly novel. And it is in this manner that young Kyoaki realizes the gravity of his passion for Satoko. Doomed from the very start, an affair begins between the childhood friends. In this shared consciousness of tragedy, their love flourishes.

At the very core of this tragic romance *Spring Snow* serves as Yukio Mishima's statement against elegance. Being a military man of action, he felt that the Japanese strayed from the righteous way of the Samurai and have alarmingly become slaves of pleasure, smitten with exterior beauty, apathetic to the real world, too taken by the West, too modern. He envisioned a traditional Japan with its graceful simplicity, austere values, and unceasing nationalism and love for the Emperor. The character Kyoaki is a warning to the people of Japan, a cautionary tale to show the rottenness that elegance is bound to instill in the indolent souls of its time. This very idea is what prompted Mishima to stage a coup d'état in 1970 to restore power to the Emperor. But he failed and thus committed ritual seppuku. However before his death, he was able to complete his tetralogy, the *Sea of Fertility*, which features *Spring Snow* as the first of four books. With this in mind, I believe it to be quite irresponsible to fully interpret an incomplete picture. To understand his real intentions, I have to complete the journey by reading the other three works. Yet as a standalone it is rather fascinating to see something that was meant to alarm, instead take one's breath away with sheer elegance. And so by embodying the object of his scorn, Mishima ironically succeeds in mirroring the very relationship of Kyoaki and Satoko.

“The path we’re taking is not a road, Kiyo, it’s a pier, and it ends someplace where the sea begins.”

All at once subtle, tender, and painful, this novel manages to evoke a somber tinge of passion in the otherwise luscious backdrop of Taisho Japan. Indeed, like spring snow, a furtive loveliness envelops the landscape of its pages but intertwined with this beauty is a faint cry of desolation, a quiet deadliness that can only enhance its icy elegance.

[P] says

Has there ever been a stranger novelist than Yukio Mishima? On the one hand, he was a body-building Nationalist, who advocated bushido, the samurai code; he also, as many know, committed seppuku, which is a ritual form of suicide involving disembowelling and beheading. You don't, it is fair to say, get that kind of thing with Julian Barnes and Karl Ove Knausgaard.

On the other hand, Mishima was undeniably a cultured man, who spoke English and dressed in the English fashion; he was a bisexual who acted in films and wrote plays as well as novels and short stories. It is almost as though he embodied the conflict – that of the traditional and reserved vs. the modern and progressive – that until very recently so dominated most of the great Japanese literature, and about which his own work, especially *Spring Snow*, is also concerned.

In what is perhaps a nod to Murasaki Shikibu's monumental *Tale of Genji*, *Spring Snow* is primarily focussed on a preternaturally beautiful young man. As with the shining prince, everyone who meets the

central character, Kiyoaki Matsugae, is struck by his attractiveness; and the awareness of his good-looks and the effect it has on other people makes him somewhat spoiled and conceited. Furthermore, although he is the son of a nouveau riche couple, who dress in Western clothes, he was actually raised by a once-prosperous aristocratic family, in order to ensure that he is well versed in traditional Japanese ways and has an elegant bearing. This upbringing means that Kiyoaki is, in a sense, caught between two different eras; he isn't fully a traditionalist [he doesn't revere the Emperor, for example], nor is he entirely modern; he is elegant, as his parents desired, but his elegance, and decadence, means that he is unfit for the modern world [for instance, out of indolence he neglects his schooling].

I imagine that it is clear already that my opinion of Kiyoaki is not especially positive. He is not bad per se, but he is tremendously arrogant and self-obsessed. Of course, you could excuse some of his flaws on the basis of his age. Kiyoaki is a teenager and so arrogance and self-obsession are pretty much part of the deal, but, even so, the behaviour of most teenagers does not lead to the ruin of numerous people. I should point out, however, that I do not think that the reader is meant to like him; I believe that, as a product of two conflicting eras, or ways of life, the effete and ineffectual Kiyoaki is, for Mishima, a necessary failure as a human being. For me, it is telling that his servant Iinuma, the one character whose attitude would have, I think, most closely resembled Mishima's own [in terms of his feelings about loyalty, duty, etc], is disappointed in him, and even, at times, disgusted by him.

“Iinuma looked down at his face, at the sensitive darting eyes with their long lashes – the eyes of an otter – and he knew that it was hopeless to expect him to swear the enthusiastic oaths of loyalty to the Emperor that a night like this would have invoked in any normal young Japanese boy.”

“Kiyoaki’s eyes were now wide open as he lay on his back staring at the ceiling, and they were filled with tears. And when this glistening gaze turned on him, Iinuma’s distaste deepened.”

As I read the novel for the second time, I was baffled by the popular opinion that it is a moving love story, or even the greatest of all love stories. Yes, it details a troubled relationship between two young people – the aforementioned Kiyoaki and the equally beautiful Satoko, the daughter of the noble family who raised the boy – but it is a strange kind of love that continually rejects someone and then suddenly wants that person at the point at which it has become impossible to have them. Perhaps Satoko does love Kiyoaki, but there is abundant evidence that the same is not true for the young man. For example, the first thing he says to his friend Honda, when an ill-looking Satoko is unresponsive towards him, is “I don’t think Satoko will sleep with me anymore”. Does that sound like love to you? No, it sounds like someone who is a bit of a dick. Don’t get me wrong, I’ve not always been a nice guy where girls are concerned, so you could say I’m in no position to judge. But on the basis of the principle of it takes one to know one I’m calling Kiyoaki out.

Moreover, although there are seemingly insurmountable obstacles to their relationship, I don’t necessarily buy the star-crossed lovers interpretation of the story because the couple, Kiyoaki in particular, cause their own problems and create those obstacles themselves. Having said that, I guess you could argue that fate or destiny is also an obstacle to the couple’s love, and this is certainly not something that Kiyoaki and Satoko can control. As you may know, *Spring Snow* is part of a tetralogy called *The Sea of Fertility*. Each book in the series deals with reincarnation and predestination. In *Spring Snow*, the first volume, there are numerous

hints and suggestions that what is happening, specifically to Kiyoaki, is, in a sense, meant to be. For example, he keeps a dream journal, and one of his dreams involves Satoko clinging to his coffin; there are repeated references to his demise, and a general sense of foreboding hangs over the novel.

“There’s no doubt that he’s heading straight for tragedy...I’ve got to use every ounce of my strength to stop him fulfilling his destiny.”

In this way, Satoko and Kiyoaki’s relationship is tragic, because they never had a chance. However, if you want to appeal to predestination then you can’t really talk about Kiyoaki at all, because without free will he becomes a non-entity. As a reviewer, in order for discussion to be possible, I want to take him on face value.

One may ask then, if Kiyoaki is so unpleasant, and *Spring Snow* is not the tragic or tear-jerking tale of adolescent love it is billed as, why should you read the book? Well, first of all, it is always engrossing; whether one sympathises with Satoko and Kiyoaki or not, one is, crucially, still interested in their fate. Furthermore, although the narrative isn’t exactly full of high-octane action, Mishima, unlike many of the other historically important Japanese novelists, does serve up a steady amount of excitement and surprise and tension. In contrast, something like Tanizaki’s acclaimed novel *The Makioka Sisters* may be wonderful, but it is at times interminably slow and uneventful; I can’t imagine that, when reading that book, there are people that have stayed up late into the night, desperate to reach the end of a chapter, so as to find out what happens next, but I can certainly see that being the case with *Spring Snow*.

I wrote at the beginning of this review that Mishima to some extent embodied the conflict that he wrote about, that of the traditional and the modern ways of life; what is most interesting about *Spring Snow* is that this conflict, this tension, is not only apparent thematically, it is in the style too. So, while the prose is undeniably graceful, as you would expect from a great Japanese novel, it lacks simplicity; indeed, Mishima’s style, with its extended metaphors, extreme emoting, and psychological depth, is, I would say, closer to Western writers, like Flaubert, Proust, and Dostoevsky, than Kawabata or Tanizaki. I would also argue that Mishima’s characters are easier to understand and relate to for a Western audience; again, one may not like their behaviour, or admire their motivations, but they are more familiar to us; Kiyoaki is a brat, for example, but we all have known brats. Satoko is perhaps more a mystery, more like the enigmatic women you find in Kawabata, but even her actions can be viewed in terms of a young girl having the hots for a great-looking guy.

Yet for all that, the biggest selling point is just how beautiful *Spring Snow* is; it really is breathtaking at times. As with Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, the prose is actually so beautiful that it is, in a sense, diverting, so that, like when in the company of a beautiful woman one becomes incapable of judging her behaviour, readers tend not to pick up on how unsavoury the behaviour of the characters actually is. Also like Flaubert, Mishima’s prose is sensual, and highly detailed. In my review of *Madame Bovary* I called the Frenchman a hyperrealist, by which I mean he makes the real or ordinary seem extraordinary, and I would apply the same term to Mishima. There are numerous passages in the text that one could highlight as evidence, but one that particularly struck me was Kiyoaki holding the train of the princess’ dress:

“Beautiful, elegant, imposing, she was like a flower at the moment of its perfection...Princess Kasuga’s hair had the blackness and sheen of fine lacquer. Seen from behind her elaborate coiffure seemed to dissolve into the rich white skin-textures of the nape of her neck, leaving single strands against her bare shoulders whose faint sheen was set off by her décolleté...she

held herself erect and walked ahead with a firm step, betraying no tremor to her trainbearers, but in Kyoaki's eyes that great fan of white fur seemed to glow and fade to the sound of music, like the snow covered peak first hidden, then exposed by a fluid pattern of clouds."

I love that. It isn't a one-off either, Mishima throws this kind of stuff out by the page. Mad, bad, and dangerous to know he may have been, but he was a wonderful, sensitive writer.

THE SEA OF FERTILITY

Volume 2: Runaway Horses <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Joel Palma says

Hands down, my favorite Japanese novel to date!!!

I can only but sigh finishing reading this masterpiece by Yukio Mishima. I am much overwhelmed by this beautifully poignant book that will surely tugs the heart of any reader.

So gorgeously written that demands to be read slow (not because one is intimidated to do so but it is such a beauty to relish every word written, I call it the "Mishima magic") and, indeed, Proustian in its rendition- as universal and constant as the waves of the sea, the introspection of the protagonist have much gone deep, lyrical, profound. Some of the chapters are as allusive, meditative and poetic like a *k?an*.

I particularly love the dialogues from Prince Pattanadid about everything sacred has the substance of dreams and memories, and so we experience the miracle of what is separated from us by time or distance suddenly being made tangible. For once the dreams and memories are beyond our grasp, the object is sanctified, once touched, we easily desecrates it. How strange man is! His touch defiles and yet he contains the source of miracles!

The book has the intimacy of Akutagawa's "Rash?mon" yet at an epic proportion. The subtleties only the Japanese can write is suffused within the pages of this book.

The characters of Kyoake and Satoko will live with me forever...Such youthful vivacity, love and promise... The book is also philosophical and ironically comic at some of the most critical parts of the story which greatly balanced the book to veer away from being melodramatic, such as Honda's musings and Tadeshina, who reminds me of Mrs. Rupa Mehra, one of the most enduring characters in the literary world from Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy".

Just as one may think that this book is only a youthful, budding love story, no... Mishima, the master storyteller, weaves a tough and timeless basketwork- with complex twistings and braids made of wood, it holds the basket in form, as a whole. Seemingly simple, this book serves as the torii gate that will open the epic "Runaway Horses", the second book in the series "The Sea of Fertility" with such vast, sheer work of genius!

The most beautiful, melancholic and touching love story I've ever read and devoured with such heartache and will remain so for a very long time.

Karl says

“Spring Snow” is volume one of Yukio Mishima’s tetralogy ‘The Sea of Fertility’. When the book opens the year is 1912 and the setting Meiji Japan, which has given way to “Taisho democracy”, an environment is that of a fading Japanese aristocracy resigned to accept into its midst the creep of a westernization of it’s culture.

Adolescent law student Shigekuni Honda is an impassive friend to Kiyoaki Matsugae, a baron’s son of distant samurai descent. Honda’s future seems preordained. Kiyoaki is a dreamer who is gripped by the sense that life’s slippery fineness is running through his fingers and away from him second by second. He longs to chase the impossible, to ‘bend the world’ into the shape of his ideals.

Kiyoaki’s desires eventually encounter the beautiful Satoko Ayakura. Although they have been friends since early childhood, they have grown into a mutual indifference of each other. When Satoko gets engaged to a prince, Kiyoaki is suddenly consumed by an inspired passion for her, and the two fall into an illicit affair that proves the undoing of them both. She gets pregnant and then gets an abortion. Honda accepts the job of go-between for the lovers, but can only watch as Satoko renounces the world and exiles herself to a remote, wintry nunnery. Kiyoaki drives himself to pneumonia in a hopeless effort to retrieve her. Dying, clutching Honda’s hand, Kiyoaki murmurs that they will meet again someday, ‘beneath the falls’.

Although it sounds a bit melodramatic, in truth the book is amazingly well written, with subtleties, implications, and consequences of environment both human and cultural that cause the reader to marvel at Yukio Mishima’s abilities. A master at work.

The closest equivalent I could suggest for comparison is the love story of ‘Romeo and Juliet’ also a story of star crossed lovers. The story is filled with symbolism, imagery and melancholy.

This Knopf hardcover edition was printed in 1972 and is the first American Edition issued as part of a set of all four books. The cycle consisting of:

Vol 1. - Spring Snow
Vol 2 - Runaway Horses
Vol 3 - The Temple Of Dawn
Vol 4 - Five Signs Of A Gods Decay

The series, which Mishima began writing in 1964 and which was his final work, is usually thought of as his masterpiece. Mishima’s ritualistic suicide in 1970 will always overshadow his work.