64. The film adaptation of Yukio Mishima's three novels and his shocking "death-story" in Schrader's *A Life in Four* Chapters

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Abstract

Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985) is one of the most comprehensive biographical representations of Yukio Mishima's literature and life, which were retroactively overshadowed by his sensational death. In this film with a multi-layered and complex temporal structure oscillating between documentary and fiction, Schrader concisely adapts *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), *Kyōko's House* (1959), and *Runaway Horses* (1969), as well as some anecdotal episodes of Mishima, for cinema. The story centres on Mishima's bizarre act of terror which he executed with his four young soldiers from his militia force, the Shield Society, on November 25, 1970, at the headquarters of the Japan Self-Defence Forces. He committed suicide by *seppukku* when his call for "Shōwa Restoration" was ignored. Hence, as this biographical film focuses on Mishima's "death" and his anecdotes connected with his "death wish" rather than on his "life-story," its genre should be renamed as a "death-story." On the other hand, Schrader consciously transformed Benjamin's "shock effect" theory into a method. According to Benjamin, the "shock effect" is caused by the constant and sudden change of images in cinema which subverts the viewer's consciousness. However, in this way, the spectator, who is forced to re-establish her/his consciousness by taking a productive stance, comprehends the film more efficiently. Our goal is to reveal how Schrader utilised Benjamin's "shock effect" in his film. To this end, we analysed the above-mentioned literary works and their film adaptations comparatively, with a particular focus on the "death-story" of Mishima.

Keywords: Literature and cinema, the shock effect, The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, Kyōko's House, Runaway Horses

Schrader'in *Dört Bölümde Bir Yaşam* filminde Mişima'nın üç romanının ve sarsıcı "ölüm-öyküsü"nün sinemalaştırılması

Öz

Paul Schrader'in *Mişima: Dört Bölümde Bir Yaşam* (1985) filmi Japon yazar Yukio Mişima'nın sansasyonel ölümünün gölge düşürdüğü edebiyatı ve yaşamını en kapsamlı olarak ele alan yaşam-öyküsel temsillerden biridir. Belgesellikle kurmaca arasında gidip gelen ve çok-katmanlı, karmaşık bir zamansal yapıya sahip olan bu eserde Schrader Mişima'nın *Altın Köşk Tapınağı* (1956), *Kyōko'nun Evi* (1959) ve *Kaçak Atlar* (1969) romanlarını, ayrıca buna koşut olarak yazarın yaşam-öyküsel anekdotlarını veciz bir biçimde sinemalaştırır. Hikâyenin merkezinde Mişima'nın 25 Kasım 1970'te, kendi milis gücü Kalkan Topluluğu'ndan dört genç fedaisiyle Japon Öz-savunma Kuvvetleri karargâhında gerçekleştirdiği garip tedhiş (terör) eylemi yer alır. Mişima, bu eylemde yaptığı "restorasyon" çağrısı karşılıksız kalınca *harakiri* yaparak intihar etmiştir. Dolayısıyla, bu yaşam-

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öyküsel film, Mişima'nın ruhundaki, yaşamındaki ve eserlerindeki "ölüm tutkusu"nu temsilleştiren bir içeriğe sahip olduğundan ötürü, filmin türü "ölüm-öyküsü" olarak yeniden adlandırılmalıdır. Öte yandan Schrader, bilinçli olarak Walter Benjamin'in "şok etkisi" *(Chockwirkung)* kuramını bir yönteme dönüştürmüştür. Benjamin'e göre, "şok etkisi" sinemada imgelerin sürekli ve ani değişmesinden kaynaklanır. Fakat böylelikle üretici bir tutumla bilincini yeniden kurmak zorunda kalan seyirci filmi çok daha etkili bir şekilde kavrar. Bu makalede amacımız Schrader'in filmde Benjamin'in "şok etkisi" kuramından nasıl yararlandığını ortaya koymaktır. Bu maksatla, adı geçen edebî eserler ile bunların film uyarlamaları Mişima'nın "ölüm-öyküsü" ekseninde karşılaştırmalı olarak çözümlenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Edebiyat ve sinema, şok etkisi, *Altın Köşk Tapınağı*, *Kyōko'nun Evi*, *Kaçak Atlar*

Introduction

On November 25, 1970, Japanese writer, poet, screenwriter, director, actor, photo model, militia commander, and political activist Yukio Mishima（三島由紀夫）performed a sensational and deadly act fusing his ultra-nationalist ideology with his *sui generis* narcissistic and artistic exhibitionism. Accompanied by his four young soldiers of the Shield Society (*Tate no Kai*, 盾 の 会), the militia that he had personally founded, Mishima went to the headquarters of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces in Ichigaya, Tokyo, under the pretext of visiting the commander. Taking the commander hostage, and threatening to kill him with a samurai sword, they forced the head officers to gather the soldiers whom Mishima addressed while media reporters were also present. In his short speech, Mishima (2003) called for the independence of his country from the military, economic and cultural domination of the United States, restoration of its former political power as well as that of the *tennnō* (天皇), the emperor of Japan (pp. 682-683). However, this reckless call for a "Shōwa Era (1926-1989) Restoration," modelled after the 1868 Meiji Restoration –the starting point of Japanese modernisation— via a military coup failed as the soldiers responded by ridiculing and insulting Mishima. He could not even make his voice heard, due to the clamour of the pugnacious crowd. He then went inside and committed the samurai-style "honour suicide," i.e. *seppuku*= 切腹 (*aka harakiri*= 腹切 or *kappuku*= 割腹). His young aide and lover, Masakatsu Morita likewise took his life. Following the tradition, another militiaman beheaded them with a Japanese sword (Güven, 2020, pp.58-59).

Indubitably, Mishima did not take this action to gain fame. He was by then an extremely popular writer in Japan and the most famous Japanese writer of all time in the world. What is more, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature three times between 1963 and 1965. On the other hand, this shocking action, oscillating between terror and theatrical performance, reality, and fiction, led to a retrospective reassessment of the works and life of Mishima in a different light. Therefore, it is obvious that his "death" was as determinant in his literary and artistic career, as his life had been.

One of the most comprehensive biographical representations treating his literature, art, and life, which were overshadowed by his death, is the American screenwriter, director, and film critic Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985). Schrader is known as the scriptwriter of such influential Martin Scorsese works as *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980), and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). In this film with a multi-layered and complex temporal structure swinging between documentary and fiction, Schrader concisely adapts Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), *Kyōko's House* (1959), and *Runaway Horses* (1969), as well as certain anecdotal episodes of

him, for cinema. At the finale, the audience witnesses the intersection and fusion of the biographical and literary lines. This intersection constituting the climax of the film, occurs in an extremely nihilistic and romantic way through the author's "death", namely, his ceremonial suicide at the headquarters of the Japan Self-Defence Forces. Thus, it is obvious that the film represents Mishima's "passion for death," which had not only been an inextricable part of his soul, but also articulated in and through his works. Even though the film seems to be biographical, namely covering Mishima's life-story, as a matter of fact, it focuses rather on his "death", or more precisely his "death-story." The film consists of scenes regarding the thoughts and actions on death and destruction of both the writer and his literary characters —who are, needless to say, his alter egos. Hence, "life" in the title (*A Life in Four Chapters*) functions as an ironic mechanism. To reformulate our thesis through Freudian terminology: the film is designed as a visual abode where the writer's death motives/Thanatos, and his life motives/Eros (Freud, 2016) clash, which would end by the ostentatious victory of the former.

Furthermore, in choosing this title, Schrader intends to confuse and mislead the audience about the content of the film, so that they would be alienated from it. Thus, the audience who experiences a "shock" through this confusion due to the stark contrast between the signifier (title) and signified (content) of the film, is enabled to comprehend the work more vividly and effectively. In a word, the director aimed to "shock" the audience throughout the film. To this end, he conceived and implemented many shocking techniques and images.

Such a *modus operandi* evokes immediately Walter Benjamin's "shock effect" *(Chockwirkung)* theory. Benjamin sets out from the Freudian concept of "shock." According to Freud, "shock" is an external stimulus that overstimulates the individual's nerves, debilitating and weakening them. The antidote to this traumatising stimulus is consciousness, which functions to soften its destructive effect on the individual's self (qtd. in Benjamin, 2007, pp. 161-162). Benjamin argues that the "shock effect", one of the fundamental characteristics of cinema, neutralises such mitigating function of consciousness. Because cinema consists of continuous and sudden change of images, it prevents the consciousness of the audience from intervening and acting as a softening shield. It hits and shatters the consciousness of the audience:

> The spectator's process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind. By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect. (Benjamin, 2007, p. 238)

In a sense, Benjamin reverses and reformulates George Duhamel's pejorative approach on cinema. As one of the angriest and most reactionary detractors of cinema, Duhamel (1930) had expressed his impressions of watching a movie as follows, "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images" (p. 52). Benjamin reorients this negative approach regarding the anti-intellectualising effect of cinema, in a positive direction by underpinning it with the Freudian concept of "shock." According to Benjamin, cinema functioned exactly like Dadaism which violently assailed bourgeois attitudes of experiencing art, at the centre of which was "contemplation." Namely, the film's speedily moving images hit the spectator like a bullet, not allowing him to leisurely watch and meditate on them, which according to Benjamin is a constructive experience. This cognitive disruption has indeed a constructive and productive purpose as it eliminates the dichotomy between makers of the film (director, scriptwriter) and the spectator as its consumer, raising the latter to a more constructive and productive position. Thus, the spectator, who is exposed to the "shock" effect, has the opportunity

to better comprehend the subject of the film by reorganising his fragmented consciousness into a meaningful totality, like a film director editing the raw footage of a film.

Thus, although Benjamin elucidates the "shock effect" as a natural, inherent feature of movies, our main argument in this article is that Schrader deliberately turned this effect into a cinematic method to make his film more striking. Yet *how* did Schrader transform Benjamin's theory of "shock effect" into a technique? What is the relation of this technique to the life, death, and works of Mishima? Did the director stick to the moral and constructive aspects of this theory? In what follows we will address these questions with the aim of clarifying Schrader's *modus operandi* in adapting the aforementioned literary works of Mishima—who shocked the *world of world literature* by his *sui generis* life, oeuvre and death—to cinema?

The structure of the film –Agitation triggered by the temporal composition

Not only shocking images that are abundantly present in the life- and death-stories and literary works of Mishima are used to shake the spectator. In addition to that, at the level of form and especially temporal structure, a tension corresponding to that of the above-mentioned Thanatos-Eros dichotomy, i.e. the dynamism based on the conflict between Mishima's death and life drives is built. Hence, we can state that the director activates the "shock effect" also through the complex temporal structure of the film. The complexity of the temporal structure derives from the fact that it is being subtly concealed. Prior to analyse the film, it is essential to reveal its complex and seemingly chaotic structure and put it in order.

The film consists of four main chapters, which are marked with titles on the screen before each episode:

Chapter I: "Beauty" —*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*

Chapter II: "Art" —*Kyōko's House*

Chapter III: "Action" —*Runaway Horses*

Chapter IV: Harmony of Pen and Sword

Apart from this explicit four-part composition, which proceeds through a linear temporal order, each episode has an implicit multi-layered configuration that is not directly presented. This configuration is not chronological provided that its different layers are not exhibited according to a certain diachronic system, which gives one the impression that this parallel establishment is chaotic and disorganised. However, with careful observation, it will be seen that this tacit temporal structure is planned quite systematically and functionally. Furthermore, it is deliberately configured so as to give the spectator the image that it is chaotic and disorderly, as the ultimate intention of the director is to shake her/him not only emotionally, but also intellectually. If that is the case, how can one categorise this apparently chaotic configuration into coherent units? What are the criteria for such a classification?

The classification criteria at the formal level are the colour and lighting techniques used in each chapter. Indeed, since the colour-light settings such as a) "Full-colour/bright images", b) "Black-and-white/relatively dim images," and c) "Seven basic colours, pastel tones/partly bright, partly dim images" are consistently repeated throughout most of the film. We can determine that each chapter consists of three story lines that run parallel to each other but concerns three different times:

a) "November 25, 1970" –"Present": This line occurs in the "present" of the film, i.e., on November 25, 1970. It moves chronologically, constituting the frame narrative of the film. The colour-light setting of this biographical line is full-colour and bright.

b) "Past" —1925-1970: Based on seemingly disconnected anecdotes about the author's past. These anecdotes are given through flashbacks. The colour-light arrangement of this line is "black-and-white and relatively dim."

c) "Literary Time" -Novel: The short film adaptations of Mishima's abovementioned three novels, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, Kyōko's House, and Runaway Horses* are presented. Although, exclusively in this line the spectator is guided through the titles of the novels, which are indicated on the screen prior to its start. The spectator is still confused, as this episode is interrupted by frequent leaps to lines a and b. Chapter IV is an exception as no novel is represented, whose reasons will be explained below. The colour setting consists of seven basic colours, pastel tones whereas the lighting is partly bright and partly dim. In order to conduct a further detailed analysis on the structure of the film and its techniques as far as they concern the Benjaminian "shock effect" theory, it would be appropriate to consider each chapter individually.

The Temple of the Golden Pavilion and Mizoguchi –Destruction triggered by beauty

As mentioned above, there are three temporal lines in the film that move parallel to each other. These lines are distinguished by different colour and lighting settings. The structural configuration of "Chapter I: 'Beauty' -*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*" is as follows:

Table 1: Temporal and technical composition of Chapter I

Title	Time	Colour	Lighting
I.a.	"Present": November 25, 1970	Full-colour	Bright
I.b.	"Past": 1920s-1940s (the childhood and youth)	Black-and-white	Relatively dim
I.c.	"Literary Time": *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*	Seven basic colours, pastel tones	Partly bright, partly dim

Chapter I opens with episode I.a which centres on Mishima's preparations for the action. He wakes up in the morning, shaves, skipping breakfast drinks a cup of black coffee. Then he calls some journalists to inform them about his plans. He makes the final checks with his four militiamen and leaves the house after wearing his uniform. In all the scenes concerning the events of November 25, 1970 the lighting is bright and images are clear. Although this episode is mainly in full-colour, there is a brief black-and-white scene in which Mishima in uniform has an illusion while looking into the mirror: the mirror reflects him wearing various masks (kendo mask, kabuki mask, etc.) (Schrader, 2007). Needless to say, this is an explicit reference to his semi-autobiographical novel, *Confessions of a Mask* (*Kamen no Kokuhaku*, 『仮面の告白』, 1949).

Episode I.b presents Mishima's childhood in black-and-white images. However, this episode too, is intricately linked with the previous one. The transition from I.a to I.b, that is, the leap from the final moments of Mishima's life to the very beginning is given in full-colour images. We first see the little Mishima in colour, looking through the window, who has been detained by his authoritative grandmother ever since he was 7 weeks (this isolation will last until he turns 12), then the image turns

to black-and-white (Schrader, 2007). These childhood years, when Mishima was isolated not only from his family but also from life outside, will be the period when his grandmother trained him in traditional Japanese performing arts and literature. In addition, the grandmother, who has a tendency to paranoia, will instil her fears of death and disease to her little grandchild (Güven, 2020, p.50). It is not hard to imagine that her hypochondria and thanatophobia had crucial effects on Mishima's obsession with death which paved the way for his performative suicide.

Although episode I.c is shot in colour just like I.b, there is a special arrangement that makes one feel entering a novel-like space: here seven basic colours are used that are presented in pastel tones. Another feature of this part is that the story is staged in a studio that evokes that of the traditional kabuki theatre stage. Therefore, this episode is not only a film adaptation of *The Temple of Golden Pavilion*, but also its theatricalisation.

The protagonist of the novel is a stuttering, ugly, and introverted boy Mizoguchi. He is an acolyte in the Zen Buddhist temple, the Golden Pavilion, which he admired and fetishised ever since his childhood, even before seeing it, inspired by his father's passion for it. Mizoguchi attempts to realise his father's dream he had designed for him: to own the temple by becoming the abbot. However, as he becomes gradually unable to cope with his overwhelming jealousy towards the beauty of the temple, he sets fire to it. After this cruel act of cultural terror, he smokes a cigarette on a distant hill and watches the temple melting in flames with cruel pleasure (Mishima, 1994, 2020).

The story is based on a real event that occurred six years before the novel was published. On July 2, 1950, a mentally unbalanced monk named Yōken Hayashi set fire to the same-named Zen temple in Kyoto, which had been considered one of Japan's most beautiful historical monuments. Although Mishima, based his novel upon this incident of arson, which not only shocked the Japanese public but also all Japanophiles throughout the world, his main intention was not merely to shed light on a historical event. He was rather interested in exploring the obsession of the sociopathic cultural terrorist, whom he substantially empathised with (Isoda et al., 1993, p. 1179). He also intended to concentrate on the phenomenon of beauty, as "the absolute," and its traumatising psychic effects on mortal individuals who feel threatened by it.

In the novel, which is based on the first-person singular narrative, events and persons are described and interpreted by Mizoguchi. Therefore, the narrative action is led by Mizoguchi, who is both the protagonist and narrator. In the novel, there is a stark paradox between the protagonist, who is flawed by a "verbal disability," obstructing him to express himself smoothly and on time, and the narrator, who is endowed with ultimate expressivity. Ironically this paradox renders the novel even more intriguing on the level of narrative discourse. In the film, on the contrary, because Mizoguchi has lost his narrative function and is relegated merely into a problematic character who cannot express himself due to his incurable stutter. In addition, the complex narrative of the novel is simplified, thereby intensified by focusing on the episode of Mizoguchi's relationship with the Dionysian Kashiwagi.

Kashiwagi is based ironically on the Don Juan archetype. He has been othered by the society because of his clubfoot, but he sublimates this obstacle into an efficient tool for womanising. He has women fall in love with him, by playing on their emotional weaknesses concerning his handicap. After having a brief affair which most often includes physical abuse, he leaves them, as a way of being revenged on the society that is cruelly discriminating him. Thus, Kashiwagi is not only a misanthrope, but also a misogynous anti-social person.

Hence, in this short film adaptation of *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, one particular episode is selected and dramatised. In addition, brief transitions are made to certain childhood anecdotes of Mishima in the line I.b. Through these infrequent transitions in the film, it is implied that Mishima partly modelled after himself while conceiving Mizoguchi. For instance, an analogy is built between Mizoguchi's hypersensitivity to the beauty of the temple of the Golden Pavilion, and Mishima's being sensually affected by Guido Reni's painting entitled *Saint Sebastian* (1615-16) which depicts Sebastiano, a Roman soldier who lived in the late 3rd century and was executed for converting to Christianity (Schrader, 2007). Accordingly, in this chapter, Schrader aims to agitate the spectator by using a cluster of shocking elements related to Mishima's life and especially to *The Temple of The Golden Pavilion*'s main theme, i.e. "destructiveness triggered by the passion for beauty."

Kyōko's House and Osamu –From narcissism to terrifying self-destruction

The structural configuration of "Chapter II: 'Art' —*Kyōko's House*" is as follows:

Table 2: Temporal and technical composition of Chapter II

Title	Time	Colour	Lighting
II.a	"Present": November 25, 1970	Full-colour	Bright
II.b	"Past": 1940s-1950s (success as a professional writer)	Black-and-white	Relatively dim
II.c	"Literary Time": *Kyōko's House*	Seven basic colours, pastel tones	Partly bright, partly dim

Episode II.a starts with the departure of Mishima to the Self Defence Forces headquarters accompanied by his four volunteer militiamen. The volunteers ask for Mishima's permission to die along with him. Mishima disagrees saying that their primary duties are to prevent the general –whom they are supposed to visit and would take hostage— from committing suicide by being affected by Mishima's *seppuku*. They also ought to convey what happened to the public and defend their cases in court (Schrader, 2007).

The transition from this episode to the black-and-white, biographical II.b occurs when Mishima sees the advertisement of his books displayed in the window of a bookstore along with a big size photograph of him. It is implied that this evokes the late 1940s, when he rose to domestic fame as a writer. II.b starts as 24-year-old Mishima looks at freshly published *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), which is exhibited in the window of a small bookstore on a narrow street. Meanwhile, American soldiers pass through the street. Thus, it is underlined that Japan was under American occupation in those years. Upon the immense success of *Confessions of a Mask*, Mishima resigns from his job as a civil servant in the Ministry of Finance and completely devotes himself to writing. He becomes a prolific writer, receiving almost all national prizes. In the next sequence, Mishima is a playwright, whose works is to be staged soon. From his conversations with the director, the spectator learns that he is now on his way to becoming a world writer: his novel *The Sound of Waves* (*Shiosai*, 『潮 騒』, 1954) has been translated into six foreign languages (Schrader, 2007).

Unlike episode II.a, in II.b there is no linear, chronological progress, the events related to Mishima's biographical anecdotes are organised in a different order to ensure thematic consistency of the episode. Namely, the temporal flow was dynamised with flashbacks and flashforwards, and the personal history of Mishima was freely deconstructed. Such a deliberate disruption of temporal linearity creates a "shock"

effect at the structural level, for exclusively the spectator who is well informed about Mishima's biography.

Exactly like the first chapter, the biographical episode II.b and the literary II.c are designed as intricate and transitive to each other. For instance, when his lover, singer Akihiro Miva (美輪明宏) broke his heart by mocking his skinny, feeble appearance, Mishima decides to start bodybuilding, which is also the subject in *Kyōko's House*'s Osamu episode, in II.c. The film emphasises that the 1951 trip to Greece was also effective in Mishima's decision to become a muscular man (Schrader, 2007). It is implied that the author apprehended that in the Apollonian aesthetics of the antique human sculptures, was something that transcended the beauty of words, which he had to achieve in his own body with the aid of body building and traditional martial arts. This process lead Mishima to his denouncement of the typical Cartesian dualist attitude of modern intellectuals to glorify the mind (intellectual and creative activities) while belittling the body (sportive and physical activities).

Hence, what connects the biographical II.b episode to II.c is this motif of "complementing inner beauty with outer beauty," which is captured in the semi-autobiographical episode of Osamu, one of the main characters of *Kyōko's House*. In order to put the story in the right context, it will be helpful to first look at the general plot of the novel: the narrative is set in 1955s Tokyo, when Japan was reborn from its ashes like the Phoenix and entered a period of extremely rapid economic growth. The protagonist of the novel is Kyōko, who is the 30-year-old daughter of a wealthy man, separated from her husband and living alone with her daughter. She transformed a part of his house into a bar, which she runs to make a living. She has four frequenters, who are also the other main characters of the novel: Seiichirō, an unsuccessful merchant; Shunkichi, a private university student and boxer; Natsuo, a painter, and Osamu, a handsome, flirtatious, narcissistic actor. These unfortunate and desperate young men, unable to adapt to the post-war Japanese society, gather in Kyōko's bar, which functions like a space of group therapy, as they seek solutions to the financial, psychological, and spiritual crises they have fallen into (Mishima, 1964).

One day fortune knocks on their doors and they find success: the merchant Seiichirō marries the daughter of a wealthy family and moves to New York. Shunkichi wins his first match by knockout. Natsuo becomes famous thanks to a painting he drew. Osamu attains physical beauty through bodybuilding and opens a new page in his career as an actor –just like his author. Nonetheless, after a while, each of them would suffer failure and defeat again. The merchant Seiichirō's rich wife turns out to be disloyal committing adultery. Natsuo's creativity reaches an impasse; unable to paint anymore, he becomes paranoid and caught up in apocalyptic thoughts. Shunkichi gets into a fight with a group of thugs, injures his hand, which forces him to quit boxing; finally, he joins a far-right group. The narcissist Osamu would suffer a rather strange ruin because of his irresponsible, self-righteous mother's debt to a pervert female loan shark. The novel ends with Kyōko's husband returning home, which ceases to be a therapeutic space where a group of young people from the post-war generation deal with themselves, their society, and the bleak zeitgeist, becoming an ordinary, middle class family home (Mishima, 1964). In other words, "Kyōko's Bar" becomes "Kyōko's House" again.

Schrader zooms in on Osamu's story, presenting it as if it were an autonomous work. His main motivation in his preference for this particular section must definitely be its shocking sadomasochistic content. As previously mentioned, in a twist of irony, just at the moment Osamu got the opportunity for rising to celebrity as an actor, he becomes the victim of the irresponsibility and materialistic pleasures of his lustful and self-indulgent mother, who is running a coffee shop. Namely, as his mother cannot pay

her 1.5-million-yen debt back to the female loan shark, Osamu is forced to sign a Faustian contract that literally relegates him into her slave, in return for her mother's debt to be cleared. Thus, Osamu delivers his soul and body to this sadomasochistic Mephistophelian loan shark. Hence, to the spectator's surprise, Osamu also masochistically enjoys being tortured by her during their intercourses. In the course of time, this deviant relationship takes a nihilistic turn for the worse: they commit suicide together.

This episode is obviously a postmodern rewriting of the myth of Narcissus in ancient Greek mythology, and more specifically of Ovid's poem "Echo and Narcissus" (ca. 8 AD), which constitute the etymological origins of the words "narcissus" (flower) and "narcissism." Ovid combines two different myths about love and death in this poem: the story of Narcissus and that of the fairy Echo (Erhat, 1993, p. 211- 212). To be more precise, Narcissus, an extraordinarily handsome hunter, humiliatingly rejects Echo who is desperately in love with him. Then, one day he falls in love with his own reflection on the river and eventually, trying to kiss it he drowns. The death of arrogant and self-admiring Narcissus devastates Echo and finally the grief literally consumes her, transforming her bones into stone, which throws back the sounds (Ovid, 1958, pp. 74-80) as her name Echo implies. They both become the victims of their passions, Narcissus for himself, and Echo, for Narcissus.

In the shocking episode of Osamu and the loan shark woman, Mishima reconstructed this story consisting of such dichotomic motifs as selfishness-altruism, love-death and beauty-destruction, linking it to the image of "double suicide for love" (*shinjū,* 心中), which is fused with sadomasochistic overtones. In the film adaptation Schrader uses pastel colours, particularly emphasising purple and blood red that evoke physical injuries. Yet the gravest shortcoming of the movie is the absence of Kyōko, despite her name is in the title of the episode. We can presuppose that the director omitted Kyōko for structural purposes, abstracting the episode of Osamu and the loan shark with the aim of forming both an accessible and agitating story.

Subsequently, the spectator is taken back to black-and-white II.b. Here, an analogical connection is established between Mishima's self-loving/narcissistic exhibitionism period, in which he performed as a photo-model and actor with an athletic body and Osamu's episode. The spectator learns that Mishima conceived and articulated the narcissistic desire for beauty as something closely related to death (Schrader, 2007). Additionally, the fact that the director selected and abstracted the Osamu episode from the novel can be linked to the fact that this episode treated the death drive (Thanatos), which is also the main theme of the film. In this reconstruction, "narcissistic admiration of beauty and death," which was a secondary motif in the novel, is highlighted overshadowing the issue of "the denouncement of Japan's materialistic degeneration," which is really the novel's central theme. Needless to say, this abstraction at the expense of the novel's "essence," enhanced greatly the film's "shock" effect.

Runaway Horses and Isao –From terror to self-destruction

The structural configuration of "Chapter III: 'Action' —*Runaway Horses*" is as follows:

Table 3: Temporal and technical composition of Chapter III

Title	Time	Colour	Lighting
III.a	"Present": November 25, 1970	Full-colour	Bright
III.b	"Past": 1965-1968	Black-and-white	Relatively dim
III.c	"Literary Time": *Runaway Horses*	Seven basic colours, pastel tones	Partly bright, partly dim

In III.a, on their way to the headquarters of the Self-Defence Forces, in the car, Mishima and his "cadets" sing a march-like yakuza song to encourage and motivate themselves. As they arrive a bit early to the main gate of the headquarters, Mishima, who is a neurotically punctual person, instructs the driver Morita to swing around the loop. Then the film leaps to the literary III.c episode, to the short film adaptation of *Runaway Horses* (1969). It is the second book of the tetralogy of *Sea of Fertility*, the last work of Mishima. The tetralogy depicts the strange friendship of Shigekuni Honda, first a law student, then a judge, finally a lawyer, and Kiyoaki Matsugae, the son of a *nouveau riche* aristocrat. Honda tracks down "the spectre" of his friend Kiyoaki, who after being disillusioned in love falls ill and dies at the end of the first book, *Spring Snow*. Namely, throughout the subsequent three books, Honda strives for protecting three youths whom he believes are Kiyoaki's reincarnations and were equally condemned to premature deaths by the Buddhist *karma* (respectively, far-right terrorist Isao; Thai princess Ying Chiang and 16-year-old orphan, lighthouse signalman Tooru Yasunaga). However, Honda the guardian angel, would fail in each attempt and in the fourth book, he would become an old, ill, and decaying angel who gradually degenerates and loses its moral values, as it is implied in the title –*The Decay of the Angel* (Güven, 2020, pp.57- 58).

Runaway Horses is set in 1932-1933's Tokyo. From various signs, Honda, by now a judge, is convinced that his late friend Kiyoaki was resurrected in the body of Isao Iinuma. He was first introduced to Isao, a passionate far-right activist and a successful *kendo-ka*, at a tournament where he went to give a speech as a judge. After becoming friends with Isao, Honda learns that he is planning a series of terrorist attacks. The plan consists of assassinating the bosses of the large industrial and financial companies who monopolise the Japanese economy, i.e. *zaibatsu* (財閥). This terrorism aims to trigger a military coup in order to overthrow the government and restore the power of the emperor. Yet Isao and his friends are arrested, and the action is intervened as his lover Makiko as well as his father reported their plan to the police. To save him, Honda resigns his judgeship, becomes his lawyer, and manages through his successful defence to have him released. However, despite all the efforts of his protective family members, friends, and especially of Honda, his "guardian angel," Isao would take them off guard and assassinate one of the *zaibatsu* bosses, Kurahara, in his villa, then commit *seppuku* at a nearby cliff on the shore. Honda did everything in his power to save Isao from his predestined karmic early death but could not (Mishima, 2002).

In the short film adaptation, Schrader focused solely on one specific episode of the novel which he laconically restructured and linked to the novel's finale. The spectator can perceive Isao's impulsive and enthusiastic personality in his conversation with his kendo teacher: being asked why he did not participate in the upcoming tournament, Isao answers that he wants yet to fight with real swords not

with the wooden ones. The subsequent scene where Isao visits Lieutenant Hori, who is supposed to be the military connection of the action they planned, in his office and gives information about their plan, is full of prophecies about the last hours of Mishima in real life. Isao's statement that they would execute their act of terrorism with swords without using modern firearms and would commit *seppuku* at the end, foreshadows the act of (self-)violence of Mishima and his four soldiers at the headquarters of Self-defence Forces. This scene is followed by a dramatic kendo match between the terrorist Isao and Lieutenant Hori. From this scene a leap is made to black-and-white, biographical II.b. episode where the spectator watches Mishima's practice of *iaido* (the traditional Japanese swordplay) while she/he listens to the romantically nihilist thesis of Mishima, through the narration of Roy Scheider, the narrator of the film. Mishima laments that the average human life is prolonged in modern times therefore modern men are deprived of the chance of dying honourably and beautifully:

> Words are a deceit. In order to transform reality, the writer must be deceitful. But action is never deceitful. The harmony of pen and sword, the samurai motto used to be a way of life, now it's forgotten. Can art and action still be united? This harmony can only happen in a brief flash. A single moment. The average age for men in the Bronze Age was 18. In the Roman era 22. Heaven must have been beautiful then. Today it must look dreadful. When a man reaches 40, he has no chance to die beautifully. No matter how he tries he will die of decay. He must compel himself to live. (Schrader, 2007)

In this passage, combining the James Dean-style "live fast, die young, leave a good-looking corpse" (Frascella & Weisel, 2006) "philosophy" and nihilistic *bushido* romanticism, the spectator is not only presented the personal and spiritual motives behind the author's shocking ultimate act, but also given some proleptic hints about the last chapter of the movie entitled "The harmony of pen and sword." It is obvious from these sentences that the writer was in the grip of a powerful death drive/Thanatos.

Then the spectator is taken back to the literary II.c episode. Lieutenant Hori has decided to quit the action team and he tries to disengage Isao as well, asking him to call off the plan. In the subsequent scene, in front of a model of a Shinto shrine reminiscent of a kabuki stage, Isao calls to his followers to quit the movement, declaring that they have lost their support within the army. While some of them leave, the majority is resolute to be loyal to their cause and go to the end with Isao. Thereupon, they turn their faces to the temple and take the oath of loyalty (Schrader, 2007). Compared to the novel the most obvious difference is the absence of Honda, who is the main character not only of this volume but also other three books of the tetralogy.

Subsequently, we are back once again to the black-and-white, biographical II.b episode, set in 1968. Mishima and other founding members of the Shield Society sign the oath of loyalty by using their blood which they obtained through cutting their little fingers, as ink. They drink the remaining blood. The emphasis on "blood" in this scene, is a prolepsis for preparing the spectator for the bloody act of terror, which constitutes the climax of the movie. This esoteric ceremony scene is followed by another ceremony in the III.b episode, namely, the event of introducing the Shield Society to the local and international media. From Mishima's justifying words to an unidentified old man, the spectator learns that while founding this militia force, he was inspired by Lord Byron, who had a private army of three hundred soldiers. What provides the element of the Benjaminian "shock effect" in this chapter are the images of "fatal violence" in both the biographical and literary episodes. For instance, in the biographical, black-and-white III.b is a scene showing the shooting of the short film *Patriotism –the Rite of Love and Death* (1966) (Schrader, 2007) –which is based on Mishima's short story entitled "Patriotism" (*Yūkoku*, 『憂国』, 1960) and which is directed and starred by Mishima himself)— where the protagonist slits his belly

open. The spectator is insinuated that this film, as well as the story it is based upon, were preparations for his dramatic suicide.

Harmony of pen and sword – "Now" as a shocking "end"

The structural configuration of "Chapter IV: 'Action' —*Runaway Horses*" is as follows:

Table 4: The temporal and technical composition of Chapter IV

Title	Time	Colour	Lighting
IV.a	"Present": November 25, 1970	Full-colour	Bright
IV.b	"Past": 1967 Special Training of the Shield Society at the facilities of the Self-Defence Forces	Black-and-white	Relatively dim
IV.c	"Literary Time": None	None	None

Chapter IV focuses almost entirely upon the bizarre act of terrorism executed by Mishima and his "soldiers" at the headquarters of the Japan Self-Defence Forces. In this chapter, true to its title, several harmonies are formed at the structural level. For instance, a consonance can be observed in the temporal setting: IV.b episode, set in 1967, is temporally very close to IV.a. Furthermore, these two episodes thematically overlap as well, provided that both are presented in black-and-white and bear intense military tones. Indeed, IV.a is about the final hours of Mishima's action and IV.b concerns the Shield Society's two-month special "military internship" in the facilities of the Self-Defence Forces, which are accompanied by some excerpts from Mishima's essay book, *Sun and Steel* (*Taiyō to Tetsu*, 『太陽と鉄』, 1968), read by Roy Scheider (Schrader, 2007).

In addition, there is no literary episode in this chapter. Therefore, while each one of the "c" episodes in the previous chapters are based on a novel by Mishima, Chapter IV contains only "a" and "b" episodes which are biographical, concerning real events. The fact that the last "chapter" does not contain a short film adaptation of a novel signifies that Schrader regards Mishima's "final act" that oscillates between fiction and reality, political violence, and theatrical performance, as a work of art. One is even tempted to say that in this chapter art and action are synthesised into one harmonious whole. Such a unification is underpinned by other fusions: art and reality; life and death.

At the end of the chapter, from the defiant and painful cries of death that Mishima let out while he is cutting his belly open with his samurai dagger, the scene shifts in a flashback to the *finales* of the short film adaptations of the three novels:

- I.c: The scene where Mizoguchi stands with a triumphant suicidal determination in the hall of the temple of the Golden Pavilion, which is cruelly destroyed by the hungry flames.

- II.c: The scene where the lifeless bodies of the female loan-shark and Osamu (whose body is covered with bruises and scars), who have committed a double "love" suicide, are lying on the ground.

- III.c: The scene where Isao commits *seppuku* on a reed bed in the dusk of the evening.

Thus, a thematic harmony is achieved between the dramatic suicide of Mishima and these self-destructions. On the other hand, Schrader did not hesitate to make some substantial distortions in the

adaptation process with the aim of ensuring the thematic harmony. For instance, even though Mizoguchi, is portrayed as masochistically preparing to commit suicide by staying inside the burning temple, in the novel, backing down from committing suicide, he flees after the act of arson, sits on top of Mount Hidari Dai-monji, "the mountain that protected the Golden Temple from the north" (Mishima, 1994, p. 281), and takes a sadistic pleasure in watching the abode of beauty metamorphosing into ashes while puffing on his cigarette.

> I looked in my pocket and extracted the bottle of arsenic, wrapped in my handkerchief, and the knife. I threw them down the ravine.
>
> Then I noticed the pack of cigarettes in my other pocket. I took one out and started smoking. I felt like a man who settles down for a smoke after finishing a job of work. I wanted to live. (Mishima, 1994, p. 283)

While Isao died on a reed bed in the film, as previously mentioned, the original setting of the suicide act in the novel is "a place where the cliff was gouged out to form something like a cavern" (Mishima, 1990, p. 430) where he took refuge after the assassination act. In this final scene, the strategic intention of Mishima to emphasise through this spatial setting (cliff gouged out like a cavern) the complex emotions and regressive, runaway mood of Isao, is totally obliterated.

Conclusion

The director Paul Schrader's *modus operandi* in *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapter*s is to represent the shocking elements in the life and literary works of the writer, by linking them with each other. At the generic level, the genre of the film does not exactly fit either documentary or fiction, constantly swinging back and forth between reality and art. Furthermore, this tension continues in the plot as well: the spectator is exposed to a ceaseless shifting movement between the dimensions of biography and literature while watching the film. These ambivalences and the film's structural complexity stemming from being divided on the synchronic level into three temporal lines separated by different colour and lighting settings as a) "Now," b) "Past," and c) "Literary time," agitate and disrupt the consciousness of the spectator. Within this frame of reference, it can be easily said that the work is extremely successful in terms of structural and technical use of the "shock effect."

Notwithstanding, there are two conspicuous shortcomings in director's method of adapting Benjamin's "shock effect" in the film. The first one is that which concerns partially distorting Mishima's literary works in the process of adaptation for the sake of thematic consistency. Schrader broke the integrity of the literary works and deformed their contents in order to create an entirely new, shocking visual integrity. Had the director remained loyal to the sensational contents of the works instead of resorting to such postmodern deconstructive interventions, he could have still achieved the agitating effect he aimed at. Moreover, in this way, he would have produced ethically smoother short film adaptations of the works he reconstructed.

Another point to be criticised is even more closely related to the issue of ethics. Namely, while Schrader focuses his energy upon enacting Benjamin's "shock effect" on the level of technique, he evidently ignores its moral background. In other words, while Schrader produced a refined sensational artistic sublimation of Mishima's Byronic, narcissistic, and lethal romanticism, he gave rise to the relativisation, legitimation, and even aestheticisation of violence at all levels. This deficiency is the result of Schrader's exclusive overemphasis on the destructive aesthetic aspects of Benjaminian "shock effect," while completely overlooking its moral dimension which in fact constitutes its core. Namely, Benjamin argued

that the "shock effect"s destructiveness paves the way for motivating the spectator to build an entirely new consciousness. Yet in this film the spectator is not directed to such a reconstruction process. On the contrary she/he is merely expected to take an artistic pleasure from the "shock" and subsequent confusion that Mishima's mysterious and intriguing life- and death-stories arouse in her/him.

Consequently, the director Paul Schrader was "technically" successful in representing Yukio Mishima's personal and artistic tendencies to "destructiveness," i.e. his "death-story," as a work of art that exclusively provides intellectual pleasure, whereas he failed in equipping the spectator with an analytical consciousness that would prompt her/him to develop a critical distance regarding such an outrageously thanatotic deviance.

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