The Iris and the Blade

KATHLEEN HILLEN

for Yukio Mishima

The body Japanese:

perfect as the words;
perfect as the death
you posed for, exposed to arrows, snow;

a saint:

a temple burning insight, crematory;

words like paper lanterns set adrift on mirrored seas;
sound of waves and you and you and you—

seconded; multiplied; the constant man;
the woman and the mask;
the incarnations of yourself turned inside out
to show the cut;

rough flower of the spleen inside
the bright kimono, opened;
arranged;
the iris with its blades turned out;

the incense of your death sweetens
the skull; dulls defeat,
the longing for a country.