

tion to the next.

The family dynasties extended into the segregated clubs, notably the Dew Drop and Club Tiajuana. And the authors' discussion of these clubs remind us that this music grew up in a segregated society. Fats Domino, for example, was discovered by a white agent who lay on the floor of a taxi in order to get to the performer's show; in 1949 it was illegal to drive a white person to a black establishment. But the success of R & B brought black musicians closer to a white market, and, thereby, to mainstream society. Whites who wanted to hear and play "black music" (rock 'n' roll was the white stepchild of R & B) helped to weaken the city's Jim Crow laws that had long kept the two races apart.

MISHIMA:
A Vision of the Void
by Marguerite Yourcenar
translated by Alberto Manguel
Farrar, 1986
152 pp. \$14.95

On November 25, 1970, Japanese writer Yukio Mishima, then 45 and renowned as a novelist, playwright, filmmaker, actor, and right-wing political activist disgusted "at the political confusion of his time," led his private band of uniformed militants into the headquarters of the Eastern Army in Tokyo. After tying up the commanding general, he leapt onto a balcony to deliver a harangue to the assembled troops; then, with the faltering assistance of aides, he committed *seppuku*, ritual samurai suicide.

This very public and, at the same time, very private man is the subject of an elegant appreciation by Yourcenar, best known for her novel *Memoirs of Hadrian* and the distinction of being the first woman elected to the Académie Française. Yourcenar recognizes that an "uneasy balance is established between our interest in the man and our interest in his books." So she mingles her discussion of both. Beginning with the autobiographical *Confessions of a Mask* (a "short masterpiece on the theme of anguish and withdrawal" reminiscent of "the nearly contemporary *Stranger* of Camus"), she proceeds through the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility*, whose "denuded style, sometimes almost flat, restrained even in lyrical moments, [is] crisscrossed with furrows intended, it seems, to make us stumble." The final volume of the latter, sent by Mishima to his publisher on the day of his suicide, contains the image of emptiness that supplies Yourcenar with her subtitle.