Dawn Book Reviews

Current and Choice

By Jadi Z. Omowale

SO SPOKE THE UNCLE
Jean Price-Mars
Translated by Magdaline W. Shannon
Three Continents Press

WASHINGTON AND TWO MARCHES: 1963 & 1983
Frederick Walton Yette
& Samuel F. Yette
Cottage Books

A MEASURE OF TIME
Posa Guy
Bantam Windstone Books

All three of the books reviewed this month offer excellent and enjoyable Summer reading, though you may need to pull your dictionary out for **So Spoke The Uncle** by Jean Price-Mars. This is a translation of a book written by the Haitian scholar in 1928.

It has never heretofore been published in English and those of us who are captured within the tiny space of the English language are grateful to Magdaline W. Shannon for her wonderful and most helpful translation.

So Spoke The Uncle could be called a pre-negritude book; negritude itself coming into full bloom in the 1940's and 1950's in the writings of African scholars in Europe. The philosophy is one of cultural black nationalism in its assertion of things black, things African and their inherent worth for black people and the world at large.

This book in effect says look at our culture, it is worthy, it is strong, it is beautiful. In this case Price-Mars is speaking of Haitian culture.

He explains early his reasoning as Haitians strive to be French; those persons, colonialists and slavers which the Haitian people overthrew in the first successful slave revolt. The people of Haiti see little value in things Afro-Haitian is what Price-Mars is saying.

The book explains the connection between Africa and Haitian culture, and has a thorough analyses of Haitian folk-lore and of particular interest is his analyses of Voodoo.

The author's insights into his Haitian religion is revealing and will probably dispense for many the myths surrounding Voodoo. Some of the material is dated but Shannon does an admirable job of updating and explanation through footnote and introduction.

All said, very well done, a classic brought to life.

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In **A Measure of Time** by Rosa Guy, the author uses her story-telling gifts well in guiding the reader through three decades in New York's Harlem through the eyes of Dorine Davis.

Unlike many of the black heroines that are appearing on the pages of so many novels these days, Dorine is anything but alienated or pathological. She is grounded in her Montgomery, Alabama roots and moving sure-footed through her future in renaissance Harlem.

Ms. Guy has created that rarest of animals, a character of full body and blood. Dorine reminds us that being a black woman can be harsh; she begins work with her grandma as a maid at nine and is raped by her employer at ten. Dorine accepts what befalls her but is determined to get out of the bigotry and dangers of her south homeland.

She does this by saving every penny she earns and though her family pulls on her and needs her she determined finally reaches Harlem where her new life begins.

Yet, though she escapes from the South, she consistantly sends money back home, puts her brother through college and returns whenever she is needed.

And Guy makes it clear that those that stay as worthy as Dorine, that they all follow the paths which they must and it is the sum of events which lead to the end of the book, when Dorine is shocked to hear that those folks whom she felt lacked courage dare back, a woman named Rosa Parks who refused to move to the back of the bus.

There is an ease to Ms. Guy's writing; the book is long but flows with the tide of history. A beautiful story that highlights the creativity of our survival.

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Washington and Two Marches: 1963 & 1983 The Third America Revolution is one of those optimistc books that does exactly what it sets out to do.

In this case, Samuel Yette, photo-journalist and author of **The Choice,** and his son, Frederick Yette have attempted to highlight and commemorate the civil rights movement of the 1960's and the March on Washington of 1963 led by Dr. Martin Luther King.

The commemoration culminates in the symbolic March on Washington which occurred in August of 1983 to note the ongoing struggle for justice after 20 years.

This book is mostly uncritical of the current state of black America, but despite the disappointment of some on that level, this book is simply not for those folks. It is for those of us who would like to retain the memories of from whence we came and who have an appreciation for good photography.

On that level **Washington and Two Marches** is a good book to have in one's collection to refer to when asked questions by children and maybe just those who are unfamiliar with the Civil Rights movement.







