

THE POETRY OF LEON DAMAS

Leon Damas: born 1912 in Cayenne, French Guiana. Studied, and lives now, in Paris. Has published five volumes of poetry.

They Came Tonight

They came tonight when the
tom
 tom
 revolved from
 rhythm to
 rhythm
 the frenzy
of eyes
the frenzy of hands the frenzy
of the feet of the statues
S I N C E
how much of M E
has died
since they came tonight when the
tom
 tom
 revolved from
 rhythm to
 rhythm
 the frenzy
of eyes
the frenzy of hands the frenzy
of the feet of the statues.

Borders

Give me back my black dolls
to disperse
the image of pallid wenches vendors of love
going and coming
on the boulevard of my boredom

Give me back my black dolls
 to disperse
 the everlasting image
 the hallucinating image
 of overdressed and heavy marionettes
 from whom the wind brings misery
 mercy

Give me the illusion never to appease
 the exposed need
 of roaring demands
 under the unconscious disdain
 of the world

Give me back my black dolls to play
 the simple games of my instincts
 to rest in the shadow of their laws
 to recover my courage
 my boldness
 to feel myself myself
 a new self from the one I was yesterday
 yesterday
 without complications
 yesterday
 when the hour of uprooting came.

Will they ever know this rancour of my heart
 in the eye of my mistrust too late opened
 they have stolen the space that was mine
 custom days life
 song rhythm effort
 pathways water home
 smoking grey earth
 wisdom words palaver
 ancestors
 cadence hands standards hands
 trampling the soil—

Give me back my black dolls
 my black dolls
 black dolls
 dolls.

LEÓN DAMAS