



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Léon-Gontran Damas papers

1949-1978

Sc MG 302

Summary

Creator: Damas, Le_on-Gontran, 1912-1978

Title: Léon-Gontran Damas papers

Date: 1949-1978

Size: 26.46 linear feet (29 boxes)

Source: Gift of Virginia de Campos Vieira, November 1989.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: This collection consists of personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, office files, research notes, and printed matter documenting the professional and literary activities of Léon-Gontran Damas, an author, lecturer, and acting-chairman of the department of African Studies and Research Program at Howard University (1975-1976).

Conditions Governing Access:

Offsite material is currently closed.

Preferred citation: [Item], Léon-Gontran Damas papers, Sc MG 302, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English Some material in French.

Processing note: Accessioned by Andre Elizee, 1989. Processed through the Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Art and Artifacts Division: artwork and posters.

Transferred to the General Research and Reference Division: books and periodicals.

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Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Creator History

Born in Cayenne, French Guiana, in 1912, Léon-Gontran Damas was a poet, journalist, educator, and statesman who co-founded the Négritude literary movement in the 1930s with the Martinique born poet Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese author and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor. Damas studied languages, literature, history, and ethnology, and began his career in journalism and literature in Paris in the 1930s. His first volume of poems, *Pigments*, appeared in 1937. He served briefly in the French army during the Second World War, and joined the French Resistance after his demobilization. Elected representative of Guiana to the French Parliament after the war, he was appointed to the High Court of Justice and served as Rapporteur of a parliamentary commission to the Ivory Coast in 1949. During the 1950s and 1960s, he lectured and traveled extensively in the Caribbean and Latin America, where he studied the influence of African culture in the New World. Appointed Distinguished Visiting Professor at Howard University in 1970, he lectured extensively at colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada until his death in 1978.

Damas's other works include: *Retour de Guyane* (1938), *Veilleés Noires* (1944), *Poèmes Nègres sur des Airs Africains* (1947), *Graffiti* (1952), *Black Label* (1956), and *Névralgies* (1966). He also edited two volumes of poetry: *Poètes Noirs d'Expression Française* (1947) and *Nouvelle Somme de Poésie du Monde Noir* (1966). His work has been translated into English, German, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. He was awarded the Prix Carai_bes in 1970. He died in Washington, D.C., in 1978.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, office files, research notes, and printed matter documenting the professional and literary activities of Léon-Gontran Damas. Smaller bodies of materials document his earlier career as representative of French Guiana to the French National Assembly in the 1950s. Damas's research notes and printed matter include a voluminous compilation of writings and biographical sketches of Brazilian authors of African descent from the 18th century to the 1950s. The Négritude movement is documented throughout the collection with published and unpublished essays, biographical and bibliographical articles, student papers from Howard University and the Federal City College in Washington, D.C., conference materials, and selected records of the Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation.

Arrangement: Arranged into 10 series: I. Biographical; II. Correspondence; III. French Guiana; IV. Writings by and about Léon-Gontran Damas; V. Conferences; VI. Research material; VII. Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation; VIII. Writings by other authors; IX. Office files; and X. Printed matter.

Key Terms

Subjects

Authors, Black

Authors, French Guianese

Blacks -- Race identity
Blacks -- West Indies -- History
Brazilian poetry -- History and criticism
Caribbean literature (French) -- History and criticism
Creole dialects, French -- Haiti
French poetry -- Black authors
Latin American literature -- History and criticism
Negritude (Literary movement)
Poets, French Guianese
Race awareness in literature

Names

Bambara, Toni Cade
Ce_saire, Aime_
Damas, Le_on-Gontran, 1912-1978
Dodson, Owen, 1914-1983
Senghor, Le_opold Se_dar, 1906-2001
Troupe, Quincy
Fondation Léopold Sédar Senghor

Container List

- Biographical
 - b. 1 f. 1-4 Biographical
 - b. 1 f. 5 Memorial tributes and programs
 - b. 1 f. 6 Stationery
 - b. 1 f. 7 Family bequests
 - b. 1 f. 8 Obituaries
 - b. 1 f. 9 Medical
- Financial
 - b. 1 f. 10 General
 - b. 1 f. 11 Retirement plan (France)
 - b. 1 f. 12 Credit Lyonnais
- Contracts
 - b. 1 f. 13 Copyrights
 - b. 1 f. 14 Présence Africaine
- b. 1 f. 15-16 General
- b. 1 f. 17-19 Damas House, Damas Center, and Damas Youth House (Cayenne)
- b. 1 f. 20 ID cards
- b. 1 f. 21 Housing (Capital Park, Washington, D.C.)
- b. 1 f. 22 Foyer Leon Damas
- b. 1 f. 23-25 Conferences and programs
- b. 1 f. 26-27 Programs in Damas's honor 1973
- b. 1 f. 28-30 Appointment calendars and messages 1975-1976
- Immigration
 - b. 1 f. 31 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Exchange Visitor Program
- b. 1 f. 32-33 Records
- b. 2 f. 1-3 Travel 1975
 - Includes travel for UNESCO, 1975.
- b. 2 f. 4 Certificates and awards
 - b. 11 Holiday, get well, and greeting cards
- Correspondence
 - b. 2 f. 5 1940s
 - b. 2 f. 6 1950-1959
 - b. 2 f. 7 1960-1969
 - b. 2 f. 8 1970-1973
 - b. 2 f. 9 1974-1978
 - b. 2 f. 10 African songs
 - b. 2 f. 11 Société Générale des Gens de Lettres
 - b. 2 f. 12-13 Présence Africaine
 - b. 2 f. 14 Stephenson, Elie
 - b. 2 f. 15 Translations

Correspondence (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 16 Hodge, Merle
- b. 2 f. 17 Folkways Records, "Poésie de la Négritude"
- b. 2 f. 18 de Moret, Anne-Marie
- b. 2 f. 19 Martinique and Guiana
- b. 2 f. 20 Brazil
- b. 2 f. 21 UNESCO
- b. 2 f. 22 Damas, Marietta Campos
- b. 2 f. 23 Miscellaneous

French Guiana 1949-1953

- b. 2 f. 24-28 General
- b. 2 f. 29 Projet de loi Damas, French National Assembly 1951

Writings by and about Léon-Gontran Damas

Arranged into two subseries: (1) By Damas and (2) About Damas.

By Damas

- b. 2 f. 30-31 Articles and essays
 - Pigments*
 - b. 2 f. 32 Translation by Merle Hodge
 - b. 2 f. 33 Translation by Edward Jones
 - b. 2 f. 34-35 Translation by Ellen Conroy Kennedy
 - b. 2 f. 36 Translation by Anne-Marie de Moret
 - b. 2 f. 37 Poems
 - b. 2 f. 38 *The Negritude Poets*
 - b. 2 f. 39-41 Selected translations
 - Includes translations by Quincy Troupe and Enid R. Peschel.
 - b. 2 f. 42 *Black World, translated by Ellen Conroy Kennedy*
 - b. 2 f. 43 *Veillées Noires, translated by Alma Byrd*
 - b. 2 f. 44 "Poésie de la Négritude", Folkways Record enclosure
 - b. 2 f. 45 "Mime de Rien"

About Damas

- b. 2 f. 46 Rigsby, Gregory. "Négritude"
- b. 2 f. 47 Patient, Francine. "Etude des champs sémantiques dans l'oeuvre de Léon Damas: Pigments"
- b. 2 f. 48 Haiti
- b. 2 f. 49 Brazil
- b. 2 f. 50 Visite au Mid-Ouest, Ames, Iowa 1971
- b. 2 f. 51 Hodge, Merle. "The Nigger in the Wood Pile"
- b. 3 f. 1-23 Various articles
 - Includes clippings, news stories, and critical studies.

Conferences

- b. 3 f. 24 Sixth Pan African Congress
- b. 3 f. 25 Research Seminar on the English Speaking Caribbean 1973
- b. 3 f. 26-27 Africa and Latin America

Conferences (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 28 UNESCO Colloquium on the Relations between Africa and Latin America
- b. 3 f. 29 African Studies Association
- b. 3 f. 30 Association du Festival des Arts Nigres 1977
- b. 3 f. 31 Printed matter

Research material

- b. 3 f. 32-34 Miscellaneous notes
 - b. 3 f. 35 West Indies, selected poems (English)
 - b. 3 f. 36 Haiti
 - b. 3 f. 37-39 Brazil
 - Includes correspondence.
 - b. 3 f. 40 Fernandes, Florestan
 - b. 3 f. 41 Negritude
 - b. 4 f. 1-3 "Anthology of African Poets and Novelists"
 - Compiler unidentified; possibly Damas.
 - b. 4 f. 4 Negritude and humanism
 - "Black Brazilian Poets", compiled by Damas
 - b. 4 f. 5-6 1730-1850
 - b. 4 f. 7-8 1850-1870
 - b. 4 f. 9-10 1871-1951
 - b. 4 f. 11 Brazilian writers, correspondence
 - b. 4 f. 12-13 Biographical sketches of Brazilian writers
 - b. 4 f. 14 "Brazilian Negro Folklore" manuscript
 - b. 4 f. 15 Lopes de Moura, Caetano
 - b. 5 f. 4
 - b. 4 f. 16-21 Brazil notes
 - b. 4 f. 22-23 Printed matter
 - b. 5 f. 5-6
 - b. 5 f. 1 Negro no Brazil, clippings
 - In Portuguese.
 - b. 5 f. 2 "The Brazilian Negro in Brazilian Society"
 - b. 5 f. 3 Brazil, literature by Blacks
 - b. 24-26a Photocopies
 - b. 26c-28 Material on French Guiana, Brazil, the French Caribbean, Cuba, Haiti, Africa, and Latin America.
- Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation
- b. 5 f. 7 Speech and articles by Damas
 - b. 5 f. 8-9 Speeches and writings by Senghor
 - b. 5 f. 10 Administrative
 - b. 5 f. 11 Senghor's visit to the United States 1975
 - b. 5 f. 12 Charter and founding documents
 - b. 5 f. 13 Clippings and articles about Senghor
 - b. 5 f. 14 Correspondence
 - Colloquium 1976
 - b. 5 f. 15-19 Papers

Léopold Sédar Senghor Foundation (cont.)
Colloquium (cont.)

- b. 5 f. 20 Agenda and administrative documents
- b. 6 f. 1-3 Friends of the Foundation
- b. 5 f. 4 Boigny Félix Houphouët Foundation for Peace Research
- Writings by other authors
- b. 6 f. 5 Adrine, Diane (Kenyette). "Black Destiny" (poems) 1974
- b. 6 f. 6 Anyanwu, K. Chukwulozie
Includes "A Cultural Theory of Knowledge", "The Nature and Meaning of Aesthetics in African (Black) Culture", and "The Study of African Religions."
- b. 6 f. 7 Ashanti, B.J. (Baron James). "Nubiana" (poems) 1976
- b. 6 f. 8 Atly, Lionel. "Noel Nègre" (poems) 1937
- b. 6 f. 9 Baghio'o, Jean-Louis
Includes "Si la Negritude m'était contée," n.d. (novel, 123 leaves) and "Notes sur les reportages de radiodiffusion," n.d. (essay, 49 pages).
- b. 6 f. 10 Blackwell, Gloria, ed. "Black Writers for Young Readers, 1964-1973: Selected Bibliography"
- b. 6 f. 11 Botchway, Francis A. "Politics as Drama: Philosophy and Opinions of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah"
Playscript, 62 leaves.
- b. 6 f. 12-13 Brachfeld, George. Anthology of francophone literature
- b. 6 f. 14 Brown, Barbara, et al. "The Contemporary Black Woman in Africa and America: A Selected Bibliography of Books and Periodical Articles Published from 1960-1975" 1975
- b. 6 f. 15 Brown, Sterling
Includes "The Blues", "Georgia Sketches", and "Three Poems".
- b. 6 f. 16 Bruly-Bouabre, Frederic. "La Symbolique-Bête" (African sayings and folktale)
- b. 6 f. 17 Cade, Toni. "On the Issue of Role" (feminist critique)
- b. 6 f. 18 Candiff, Julien. "African, Antillean and Malagasy Writers of French Expression: A Selected Bibliography" 1976
- b. 6 f. 19 Carter, Karl. "A Season in Sorrow and Other Times" 1969
- b. 6 f. 20-21 Césaire, Aimé 1966-1973
Includes "La Tragédie du Roi Christophe" (translation into English, program, and review), poems, and some printed matter on Césaire.
- Colvin, Lucie
- b. 6 f. 22 "Islam and the State of Kajor"
- b. 6 f. 23-25 "Kajor and its Diplomatic Relations with St. Louis du Senegal, 1763-1861" 1972
Title page missing.
- b. 6 f. 26 Dadie, Bernard. "Monsieur Thogo-Gnini" (playscript) 1966
- b. 6 f. 27 Dare, Bernard
Includes "Les Jolis paquets d'Abibo" and "Les Enchères".
- b. 6 f. 28 Dodson, Owen. "The Land of the Living and the Land of the Risen Dead, Four Song Cycles Sung by Mary, Joseph, the Magdalene and Jesus" 1962
- b. 6 f. 29 Dogbeh-Davis, Richard. "Vive le Benin" (poems) 1965
- b. 7 f. 1 Dorsinville, Roger. "Héritage de vainqueurs. Book one: Le Monde de Robert Brémont," 1965

Writings by other authors (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 2 Du Prey, Pierre
Includes "La Stance", "Esther", "Le Mal du pays", and "Contes pour enfants" (short stories and novellas).
- b. 7 f. 3 *L'étudiant Martiniques excerpt, "Misere des Etudiants"* 1934
- b. 7 f. 4 Fall, Kiné Kirama. Poems
- b. 7 f. 5 Gambari, Ibrahim Agboola. "The Politics and Economics of Regional Cooperation in West Africa" 1975
- b. 7 f. 6 Gauthier, Monique. Poems
- b. 7 f. 7 Goffin, Robert. *Preface to Pigments (from box 9)* 1962
- b. 7 f. 8 Hazoume, Paul. "A Nos Cousins d'Abomey"
- b. 7 f. 9 Henriques, Fernando. Caribbean research project 1968
- b. 7 f. 10 Holloway, Lou Emma. "And the Other Cried, Lord Have Mercy; Black Women Artists on Martin Luther Kings's Assassination" 1975
- b. 7 f. 11 Howard University faculty papers
- b. 7 f. 12 Hughes, Langston
- b. 7 f. 13 James, C. L. R
- b. 7 f. 14 Jeanson, Untitled novel, Ivory Coast
- b. 7 f. 15 Joans, Ted. "La Beaute" (poem) 1964
- b. 7 f. 16 John, Gisèle. "Le Thème de la mort dans le théâtre d'Aimé Césaire" 1967
- b. 7 f. 17 Jordan, June. Poems 1972-1974
- b. 7 f. 18-19 Juminer, Bertene ca. 1977
Includes "L'Archiduc sort de l'ombre" (playscript) and "Les Heritiers de la presqu'île" (novel).
- b. 7 f. 20 Kanie, Anoma. "Le Marriage interdit" (playscript)
- b. 7 f. 21 Karl-i-Bond, S. E. Niguza. "The Policy of Recourse to Authenticity"
- b. 7 f. 22 Kelly, Patricia Ann. "Angela Davis and George Jackson, Symbols of the Struggle" 1972
- b. 7 f. 23 Kuoh-Moukouri, Manga. "Amour via liberté" (poems) 1970
- b. 7 f. 24 Lambelhole, Maurice. "Synthèses" (African axioms)
- b. 7 f. 25 Lero, Etienne, René Ménil, et al. "Manifeste de `Légitime Défense'" 1932
- b. 7 f. 26-27 Ligny, Michel 1965
Includes "Journal d'une cure de désintoxication" ("Journal of a Cure of Disintoxication"), 1965, and "Dix-neuf poèmes".
- b. 7 f. 28 Lomami-Tshibamba, Paul. "Ah! Mbongo..." (novel)
- b. 7 f. 29 Malonga, Jean
- b. 7 f. 30 Maran, René. "Albert Camus et l'Algérie"
- b. 7 f. 31 Mars, Louis. "Nouvelle contribution à l'étude de la crise de possession" 1959
- b. 7 f. 32 Mello, Sylva. "Biologia e Sociology do Negro"
- b. 7 f. 33 Miatlev, Adrian. Poems 1958-1962
- b. 7 f. 34 Miscellaneous speeches and articles
- b. 7 f. 35-36 Miscellaneous verses
- b. 7 f. 37 Morisseau-Leroy, Felix. "Antigone en Créole" (playscript) 1953
- b. 7 f. 38 Moulare, H.T. Ahioua. "L'Evolution de la famille ivoirienne" 1968
- b. 7 f. 39 Nnolim, Charles. "The Meaning of Babo in Melville's 'Benito Cereno'"

Writings by other authors (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 40 Nyerere, Mwalimu Julius K. "The Rational Choice", address delivered at Sudanese Socialist Union Headquarters 1973
- b. 7 f. 41 Osolo-Nasubo, Ng'weno. "The Agony of 'Uhuru' (Independence) in Africa: the Angolan Case" 1976
- b. 7 f. 42 Pedroso, Regino. "Seleccion de Poemas del Libro Antologia Poetica" 1938
- b. 7 f. 43 Pfister, Arthur. Poems
- b. 7 f. 44 Picott, Rupert. "Before, Behind, Between, Above, Below" (fiction)
- b. 7 f. 45 Pobbi-Asamani, K. "The Implications of the Enlarged EEC Associates for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Countries: Exploitation or Partnership" 1975
- b. 7 f. 46 Poller, Nidra. "How Do You Address the Asylum?"
- b. 8 f. 1 Rey, Edmonde. "Araignées" (novel) 1940
- b. 8 f. 2-3 Rigaud, Milo. "La Fantastique symphonie" (novel)
- b. 8 f. 4 Rouil, Marie-Thérèse. "La Rose des Sangs" (novel)
- b. 8 f. 5 *Sanz y Diaz, José. Prologue and poems from Lira Negra* 1962
- b. 8 f. 6 Sargeant, Edward. Poems
- b. 8 f. 7 Senghor, Leopold Sedar. Speeches
- b. 8 f. 8 Sibide, Mamby. Address on the history of the Niafunke region in the Sudan before the French conquest 1953
- b. 8 f. 9 Smith, Leslie. "Leopold Sedar Senghor: An Essay on Negritude and Poetry"
- b. 8 f. 10 Soyinka, Wole. "Le Monde Africain dans la problématique ethno-culturelle" 1976
- b. 8 f. 11 Stephenson, Elie. "Une Flèche pour le pays à l'encan" (poems)
- b. 8 f. 12 Sule, Alahaji Yussuf Maitama
- b. 8 f. 13 Thomas, Clive
- b. 8 f. 14 Troupe, Quincy. "Embryo" (poems) 1971
- b. 8 f. 15 Vera, Maite. "Las Ulloa"
- b. 8 f. 16 Ward, Wardell Louis. Poems
- b. 8 f. 17 Warhaftig, Alan Matt. "The Morphology of Memory" 1976
- b. 8 f. 18 Warner, Keith 1976
Includes "Creole Languages and National Identities in the Caribbean", "Three Poems from Trinidad", and "On Teaching African Literature to West Indian Students".
- b. 8 f. 19 Unknown author. "Africa and the Question of Chinese Representation in the U.N."
- b. 8 f. 20 Unknown author. "African Retentions in the Music of Jamaica" 1974
- b. 8 f. 21 Unknown author. "La Revolution Angolaise"
- b. 8 f. 22 Unknown author. "Pan-Africanism"

Office files

- b. 11 Business cards and addresses
- b. 12-16 Howard University
- b. 16 Federal City College
- b. 17-19 Student papers

Printed matter

- b. 8 f. 23 African Studies and Research Program newsletter
- b. 8 f. 24 African Studies programs

Printed matter (cont.)

- b. 8 f. 25 "The Africanist, a Student Journal of African Studies"
- b. 8 f. 26 American Forum for International Study
- b. 8 f. 27 Bibas, Marcel. "Trois Cas Inedits de Tuberculose Pulmonaire"
- b. 8 f. 28 Brown, Sterling
- b. 8 f. 29-32 Center for African and African-American Studies (CAAS) occasional papers
 - b. 9 f. 1 Alexandre Dumas and Haitian literature
 - b. 9 f. 2 Eboué, Félix
 - b. 9 f. 3 L'etudiant Senegalais
 - b. 9 f. 4-5 French Guiana
 - b. 9 f. 6 Jeunesse Africaine de Leopoldville
 - b. 9 f. 7 Kimbangu, Simon
 - b. 9 f. 8 Linguistique Amerindienne
 - b. 9 f. 9 La Radiodiffusion Outre Mer
- b. 9 f. 10-13 General
 - b. 10 Includes one folder of duplicates.
- b. 20-22 Clipping files