

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> <b>University of Glasgow</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> <b>29 – English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> <b>Enhancing international awareness of Caribbean culture through creative writing</b>
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>

Dr Kei Miller is a Jamaican poet, novelist, essayist and editor based at the University of Glasgow, who works in a range of different media to promote international awareness of Caribbean culture and literature. He has championed the Caribbean voice as judge of the Commonwealth Book Prize, as editor of the Heinemann Caribbean Writers series, and in his own creative output of three books of poetry, two novels, one collection of short stories and a forthcoming book of essays. He provides guidance and encouragement to emerging writers through festivals, workshops and residencies, is an established practitioner-tutor for the British Council, and has been recognised as an important cross-cultural voice in being selected for a leadership role with the International Writing Program at Iowa State University.

<b>2. Underpinning research</b>
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The research of Kei Miller (Reader in English Literature, University of Glasgow, 2007-present) takes four main forms.

The first is **poetry**, as embodied in three published collections (2006; 2007; 2010) which explore Miller's personal responses to living in Jamaica, to emigration and exile, to travel, and to the linguistic, political, racial, intellectual and emotional conflicts he has encountered as a Jamaican at different stages of his personal and artistic development. The link between Miller's poetry and song, as indicated in the title of his latest collection *A Light Song of Light*, was recently highlighted by his commission to work on a libretto for a new work for voices and instruments to be performed at the Wigmore Hall.

The second form is **prose fiction**, as represented by two novels and miscellaneous short fiction (2006; 2008; 2010). These address the problem of bringing home a sense of new possibilities, discovered abroad, without either losing awareness of one's own identity or becoming embroiled in old familiar restrictions; and questions of how to communicate the specifics of Caribbean culture to the world at large, in such a way as to enable listeners and readers to understand and pay attention.

The third form is that of the **experimental essay**. A collection is forthcoming in 2013 which expands on the topics explored in his verse and fiction as it describes Miller's movements across Caribbean, European, African and American horizons, using a variety of techniques that incorporate memoir, interview, prayer, invocation and prophecy. The essays were written for occasions that range through the spectrum from private and personal to public and formal. Their close alliance both to prose fiction and to poetry has been commented on in readers' reports.

The final form in which Miller has worked is that of the **edition**. In 2007 Miller put together the Carcanet *New Caribbean Poetry: An Anthology*, which showcases the writing of both newly established and emerging poets, making some of these internationally available for the first time. More recently (2011) he has been appointed series editor for the Heinemann Caribbean Writers Series, several titles of which are included on O and A level syllabuses in nine Caribbean countries.

### 3. References to the research

#### Poetry

- *Kingdom of Empty Bellies* (Heaventree Press, 2006)
- *There is an Anger that Moves* (Carcanet, 2007)
- *A Light Song of Light* (Carcanet, 2010) [REF 2]

#### Prose Fiction

- *Fear of Stones and Other Stories* (Macmillan Caribbean, 2006)
- *The Same Earth* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008) [REF 2]
- *The Last Warner Woman* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2010; American Edition Coffeehouse Press, 2012; Polish Edition Swiat Ksiazki, 2012)

#### Essays

- *Writing Down The Vision* (Peepal Tree Press, forthcoming 2013), essays.

#### Editorship

- Editor, *New Caribbean Poetry: An Anthology* (Carcanet, 2007)
- General Editor, Heinemann's Caribbean Writers Series (September 2011 - present)

### 4. Details of the impact

Miller is a prolific writer, poet and essayist who contributes to public dialogue in and between countries, inspires the professional development of emerging writers, and is committed to enhancing the international profile of Caribbean literature and culture.

#### Impact on Cultural Life

Between 2008 and 2013 the combined sales figures for Miller's two novels – *The Same Earth* and *The Last Warner Woman* – were 11,400 print and ebook and 423 audio copies. (He also sold the US and Polish publishing rights for *The Last Warner Woman*.) 622 print copies of *New Caribbean Poetry: An Anthology* were sold, along with a combined 1,911 print copies of two poetry collections, *There Is An Anger That Moves* and *A Light Song of Light*.

Miller was shortlisted for the 2008 Dylan Thomas Prize; received the Institute of Jamaica's Silver Musgrave Award in 2009; and was appointed as one of the six judges for the 2012 Commonwealth Book Prize. His novel *The Same Earth* won the 2008 Una Marson Prize for Literature and was shortlisted for the Scottish Arts Council's Book of the Year Award in 2009. His third poetry collection, *A Light Song of Light*, was shortlisted for the 2010 Jonathan Llewelyn Rhys Prize and the 2010 Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature. Two of his poems were selected as Poem of the Week for *The Times* and *The Guardian* respectively (10.8.2010 and 8.8.2011).

In 2010 Miller served as Poet in Residence for the British Poetry Archive and for the StAnza International Poetry Festival in St Andrews. Between 2011 and 2013 he was invited to speak at 26 festivals and literary events in 18 countries. International activities in the REF period built on his established position as an enabler and speaker with UNESCO, for whom he delivered writers' workshops and public talks throughout the Caribbean between 2003 and 2005, addressing and teaching around 1000 people altogether. In 2012 Miller was commissioned by the Manchester Literature Festival to write a suite of poems in response to the exhibition 'Hockney to Hogarth: A

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Rake's Progress' at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (October 2012 to February 2013). He gave a reading of the poems to an audience of 50 at the Whitworth Gallery in September 2012. Since then the poems have been available on the [Manchester Literature Festival](#) website, and downloaded over 750 times.

Miller hosted seven programmes on BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Scotland in association with the Scottish Poetry Library and their 'Poetry 2012: Written World' project, which sought to broadcast a poem from every country participating in the London 2012 Olympic Games. These shows were also released as podcasts and received a total of 26,607 iPlayer download requests.

In 2013 Miller was commissioned to work with the composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad on the libretto for a new work for soprano, mezzo soprano, baritone and piano to celebrate the centenary of Benjamin Britten's birth. The work will be premiered at the Wigmore Hall in November 2013 by the Prince Consort. It was co-commissioned by the Prince Consort and Wigmore Hall, with the support of André Hoffmann, president of the *Fondation Hoffmann*, a Swiss organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development, international governance, education and culture.

### Impact on professional development of emerging writers

Miller has contributed to the professional development of writers through a range of formal creative writing programmes, leading workshops in Singapore as part of the British Council-supported [2011 World Voices Series](#), at the Wordsworth Trust in Cumbria (February 2012), and at the [Bocas Festival](#) in Trinidad (May 2012). He was also an invited speaker at the [Emerging Writers' Festival](#) in Melbourne (2011). Numbers of participants at these events varied widely, from c.15 at the Singapore workshop to over 1,000 at the final reading in Sydney.

He has participated in several cultural exchanges run by the International Writing Program (IWP) at Iowa State University, which is supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US State Department. The purpose of the IWP is to bring emerging American writers into contact with other cultures through residencies, writing workshops, performance tours and other events. Following his appointment as [Writer in Residence](#) at Iowa from September to December 2007, in May 2008 Miller was given an IWP leadership role in the third [New Symposium](#), held on the island of Paros, Greece, for which the IWP convened a group of international writers to engage in a week of dialogue and debate. In April 2011 he was one of eight international writers invited to participate in [Writers in Motion](#), an IWP tour of the Mid-Atlantic and the American South where historical crises and upheavals (both natural and social) had taken place, and to contribute a reflective travel essay on 'Grief Spaces', which is to be published as part of his forthcoming essay collection, *Writing Down the Vision*. Also in 2011 he co-taught an IWP creative writing course online.

Most recently he was appointed Artist-in-Residence at the University of the West Indies at Mona (2013).

### Impact on Caribbean literature and culture

In 2007 Miller edited the Carcanet *New Caribbean Poetry: An Anthology*, which showcases the writing of both newly established and emerging poets, making some of these internationally available for the first time. His editing skills were highly praised in the *Caribbean Review of Books* for May 2008: 'a thoughtful compiler is a creator. Pride and tradition, hard-won, prepared the way for Miller's companionability and ease'. Since its publication the new poets included in it have achieved notable success. Christian Campbell's debut title *Running the Dusk* (2010) won the Aldeburgh First Collection Prize; Loretta Collins Klobah won the 2012 Bocas prize for Poetry after publishing her first collection, *The Twelve Foot Neon Woman* (2011); and Tanya Shirley's first

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collection *She Who Sleeps with Bones* (2009) was named a Jamaican bestseller in the year of its publication. Interviews and articles on all three of these poets, as well of others in the anthology, point up the significance of their inclusion in Miller's book.

Miller has a direct impact on the delivery of curricula in schools in the English-speaking Caribbean through his role as editor (since 2011) of the [Heinemann Caribbean Writers' Series](#). The Heinemann series currently offers 29 titles, many of which are prescribed texts for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) and GCSE. The syllabus for these qualifications is formulated by 'Panels of subject specialists drawn from those groups responsible for the design and the implementation of curriculum – classroom teachers, members of regional universities and other tertiary institutions' ([CAPE website](#)). Approximately 4,000-6,000 candidates across the region sit the CAPE exams each year. Popular choices from the Heinemann list on the syllabus include Curdella Forbes' *Songs of Silence*, Earl Lovelace's *The Wine of Astonishment*, and Paulette Ramsay's *Aunt Jem*.

In 2012 Miller became a founder member of the Caribbean Literature Action Group (CALAG), which met in Trinidad in March 2012, hosted by the British Council and the Commonwealth Foundation, to address the state of Caribbean Publishing today. In April 2013, CALAG developed and launched CaribLit ([www.cariblit.org](http://www.cariblit.org)) a new website for writers and publishers offering practical advice and industry updates on publishing, marketing, distribution and bookselling in the Caribbean.

<b>5. Sources to corroborate the impact</b>
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Impact on cultural life and Caribbean literature

- Reviews of Miller's work, including *A Light Song of Light*, *There Is an Anger That Moves* and *New Caribbean Poetry* on the Carcanet website ([link](#)); The Independent review of *The Same Earth*, 18 May 2008 ([link](#)); The Publisher's Weekly review of *The Last Warner Woman*, 19 December 2011 ([link](#)); The Oprah Magazine's summary of *The Last Warner Woman*, one of the '17 Books to Watch for in April 2012' ([link](#)); Perseus Academic list of reviews of *The Last Warner Woman* ([link](#)); The Independent review of *The Last Warner Woman*, 1 May 2011 ([link](#)); An appreciation of Miller's Poem of the Week for *The Guardian* ([link](#))
- An account of Miller's achievements leading up to the Silver Musgrave Award in 2009 ([link](#))
- *The Same Earth's* Shortlisting for Scottish Book of the Year ([link](#))

Contribution to emerging writers' development

- [CaribLit website](#), offering guidance for writers and publishers
- Evidencing sustained International Writing Program involvement, as [Writer in Residence](#), invited participant on [Writers in Motion](#) tour and in [New Symposium](#)
- Evidencing participation in events organised for emerging writers, including British Council and Art House [World Voices Series](#) (Singapore), Melbourne [Emerging Writers Festival](#) and the [Bocas Festival](#) (Trinidad and Tobago). Also evidences the international reach of Miller's work.