


English and Drama

This blog is by curators from the English and Drama department of the British Library. Headed by Jamie Andrews, the department specialises in literature and theatre from the 16th century to the present day, with responsibility for the Library's collections of modern literary manuscripts (led by Rachel Foss), printed literary sources (led by Tanya Kirk) and drama and literature recordings (led by Steve Cleary).

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08 October 2012

The Power of Caribbean Poetry – Word and Sound

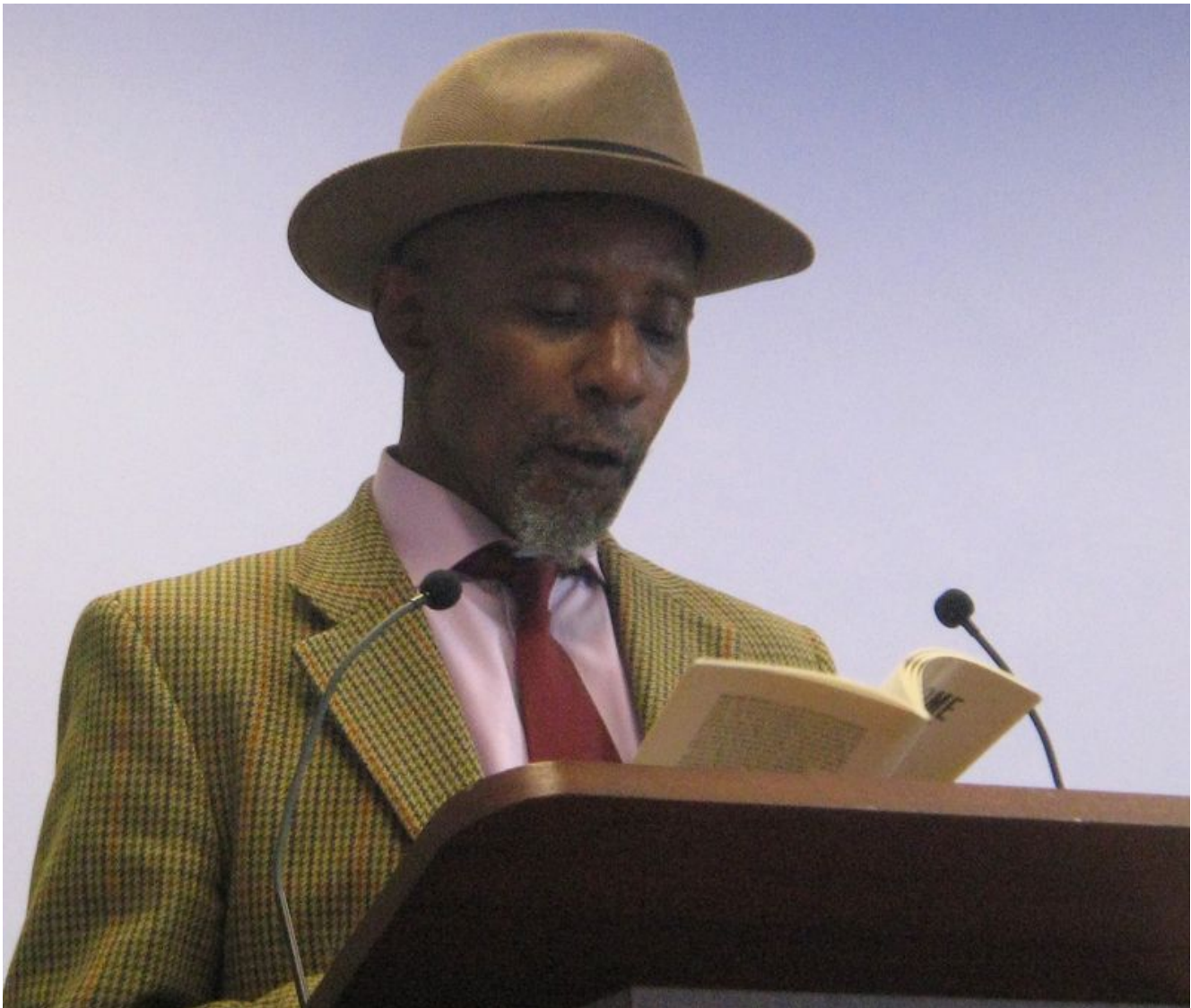
On 20-22 of September the British Library recorded *The Power of Caribbean Poetry – Word and Sound* at Homerton College, Cambridge. This was a conference on contemporary Caribbean Poetry from English-speaking territories linked to the Caribbean Poetry Project 2010-2012, which is a collaboration between the Centre for Commonwealth Education (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge), the University of the West Indies at Mona (Jamaica), St Augustine (Trinidad) and at Cave Hill (Barbados), conceived to promote and disseminate the teaching, understanding, and appreciation of Caribbean poetry in the Caribbean and the UK. See [here](#) for further details.



Grace Nichols

The conference was structured around a generous programme with participants and experts from both hemispheres. Its three days elapsed among scholarly papers, panel discussions, seminars, poetry readings and late-night sessions of poetry entertainment. The papers revealed many of the multiple subjects of Caribbean poetry, crossing over several disciplines: from literature to history, anthropology, sociology and ethnomusicology, and included environmental approaches, postcolonial views, perspectives on cultural identity, polyphonic interpretations and analysis of ethics of representation, just to mention some of the topics. The seminars addressed aspects of teaching and learning Caribbean poetry, providing creative methodologies for both teachers and students. In conjunction with this polymath learning there was an exquisite cast of poets who read and performed each evening till late, treating the delegates to an unforgettable experience.

In her opening speech Professor Morag Styles, Project Director, stated that this was the biggest line-up of Caribbean poets ever to appear in Cambridge. Here is the list for your consideration: John Agard, Christian Campbell, Kei Miller, Mark McWatt, Mervyn Morris, Philip Nanton, Grace Nichols, Velma Pollard, Olive Senior, Dorothea Smartt and special guest Linton Kwesi Johnson, who gave a lecture on Jamaican poet Michael Smith. In addition to the poetry Morris, Senior and Campbell gave keynote lectures: Morris focused on poetry and language showing examples of Creole and Caribbean English; Senior on poetry and play; and Campbell on a book he is writing on Caribbean poetry.



Linton Kwesi Johnson

The Caribbean Poetry Project has also collaborated with the online Poetry Archive set up by Andrew Motion (see [here](#) for more), leading to new recordings of several Caribbean poets. Besides Nobel Prize winner Derek Walcott, Jean 'Binta' Breeze and James Berry the list currently includes Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mervyn Morris and Olive Senior, while Christian Campbell, Anthony Joseph and Velma Pollard are soon to be added.

The landscape of Caribbean poetry is transnational and full of features. In brief we could say it is critical at heart, often political and social, frequently jocular and closely entwined with the rhythms of reggae, dub and calypso.



Kei Miller

The recordings of this conference will be accessible online at the [British Library Sounds page](#) once they have been processed. Look out for them and tell us what you think. Until then here is a sample of Kei Miller reading his poem 'Speaking in Tongues'.

[Listen to Kei Miller reading in Cambridge](#)

Posted by [Eva del Rey](#) on 08 October 2012 at 12:02 PM | [Permalink](#)

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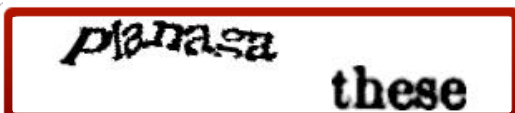
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