CREATING POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE
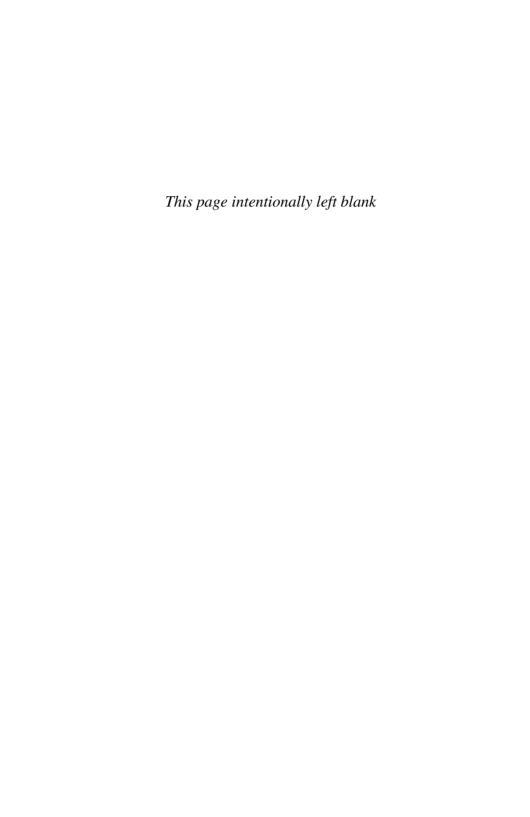
African Writers and British Publishers

Caroline Davis

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List of Abbreviations

AOUP   Archives of the Oxford University Press, Oxford
CTAR   Cape Town Archives Repository
CTU   Cape Town University Libraries
LUL   Leeds University Library Special Collections
NELM   The National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown
OUP   Oxford University Press

Introduction

> To represent Africa is to enter the battle over Africa.
> – Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 80

This is a book about a largely forgotten series of postcolonial literature, Three Crowns, which was one of the earliest attempts by a British publisher to establish a list of African creative writing. Established by Oxford University Press in 1962 and continuing until 1976, it was the vehicle for the international publication of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard as well as Lewis Nkosi, John Pepper Clark, Obi Egbuna, Oswald Mtshali, Joe de Graft and Léopold Sédar Senghor, amongst other African writers. Although small, controversial, financially unsuccessful and short lived, the series provides a unique insight into the process of postcolonial literary production and transnational cultural relations.

While the main focus is the Three Crowns series, it also raises important questions about the history, politics and economics of publishing postcolonial literature in general. In the 1960s and 1970s, the publication of African literature in English was dominated by British commercial publishers. Faber & Faber published novels by Amos Tutuola, Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele in the 1950s. Heinemann published Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 and, through Heinemann Educational Books, founded the African Writers Series in the same year as Three Crowns, which quickly became the market leader in the field, publishing 360 titles in total.[1] In the early 1960s, many other British publishers were keen to obtain manuscripts from novelists, poets and playwrights from the newly independent states now emerging in Africa. The London office of André Deutsch published several works of African literature from 1964, and in 1967 went on to become a partner in the East Africa Publishing House in Nairobi, which published African literature for the Kenyan market through its Modern African Library. Longman published the work of several African authors from 1965, including Mbella Dipoko, Ama Ata Aidoo and Efua Sutherland, and then established the Drumbeat series from 1979 to 1985, in which they published

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the work of Ben Okri and Miriam Tlali amongst others. By the late 1960s there was a growing trend for African literature in many London publishing houses: Allen & Unwin, Cape, Collins, Evans, Gollancz, Hutchinson, Macmillan, Murray, Methuen, Michael Joseph, Museum Press, Nelson, Penguin, Thames & Hudson and the University of London Press.[2] This study aims to contribute to two broader questions: how did Britain impose and maintain its cultural dominance over anglophone African literature beyond the end of formal colonisation in the continent; and what role was played by British publishers in the creation of African literature in this period of decolonisation?

The literature of the Three Crowns series exemplified the 'literary activity of self-making and nation-building', which was described by Elleke Boehmer as a response to decolonisation: 'Writers … were involved as the beacons, soothsayers, and seers of political movements. It was seen as a writer's role to reinterpret the world, to grasp the initiative in cultural self-definition.'[3] Part of a wider intellectual search for an identity independent of the European colonial powers, these new African authors in the series narrated the new nations and sought to modify, subvert or reverse the prevailing discourse about Africa. They readdressed African history and culture, and focused on the formerly silenced and marginalised from a wide variety of perspectives: Nkosi, Mtshali and Fugard dealt with the struggles and oppression of black and coloured South Africans; Egbuna wrote of the cultural dislocation of colonialism, in terms of religious conflict, disputes over medical practice and conflicts caused by white settlers in East Africa; de Graft explored intergenerational conflicts in Ghanaian society; Clark wrote of cultural transitions in rural Nigeria, while Kimenye wrote of village life in Buganda; Easmon satirised postcolonial elites in decadent, independent West African society; Soyinka assumed a lead role as critic of his new nation, denouncing the regime's betrayal of the ideals of the national liberation movements. The literature in the Three Crowns series was part of an intellectual process of resistance against colonialism and apartheid, as well as a critical engagement with the post-independence nations. However, it was mediated by a British publisher which not only had a long history of colonial publishing, but also had a continued commercial involvement with the postcolonial African governments as well as the South African regime under apartheid. This study investigates how this paradoxical situation came about, and what its implications were for African literature. It explores the nature of the publisher's interventions in the literature of this series, both institutionally and in terms of the text and paratext of the published books.

Constituting African literature

There are two prevailing models that have been used to explain the relationship between the Western publisher and the African writer: one which

presents the publisher as a benign influence, 'a necessary mid-wife to the author's prose' to use the metaphor employed by Juliet Gardiner,[4] and another that presents the publisher as an agent of cultural imperialism.

In the first model, the residual rhetoric of the 'civilising mission' persists. The European publisher is depicted as an important patron, offering vital support for African writers and bringing books, and thereby education and enlightenment, to the continent. Publishers' official histories tend to celebrate their achievements in disseminating books throughout Africa whilst underplaying the economic significance of these markets to themselves as publishers, for example in the official histories of Heinemann Educational, Longman and OUP.[5] In addition, Charles Larson argues that European publishers were crucial in supporting African writers in the late twentieth century, and considers that authors in former British- or French-ruled countries were given far more opportunities to be published than those in countries without a colonial history, for example, Liberia.[6] Phaswane Mpe's review of the African Writers Series also reflects on the positive benefits of the European–African literary interchange, in particular in providing a means of publication to authors whose work would be censored in their own countries.[7] Hans Zell regards publishers' investment in literature and books for the general market as compensation for their involvement in the 'lucrative educational book market'. He credits Western publishers, and Heinemann in particular, with the development and growth of a literary culture in Africa.[8]

However, a second, contrasting view of postcolonial publishing has been expounded by African Marxists. It identifies enduring structures of cultural domination in postcolonial literary institutions. For example, although Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa and Ihechukwu's critique relates specifically to Western critics and academics rather than publishers, they maintain that African literature was expected to conform to European literary canons and that African writers sought to supply the European literary tourist with 'new supplies of exotica'.[9] Similarly, Aijaz Ahmad writes, again in very broad terms, of the impact of Western literary institutions on postcolonial literature:

> Third world literature … comes to us not directly or autonomously but through grids of accumulation, interpretation and relocation, which are governed from the metropolitan countries … it has been selected, translated, published, reviewed, explicated and allotted a place in the burgeoning archive of 'Third World Literature' through a complex set of metropolitan mediations.[10]

It is my intention to test some of these more abstract models and speculations that cast Western publishers as either agents of a 'civilising mission' or agents of 'cultural imperialism' with reference to a detailed case-study of

the publishing strategy of the Three Crowns series. Based on evidence from previously unexplored archives and extensive oral testimonies, I seek to understand how the literature in the series was selected, which literature was excluded and how the texts were produced, marketed and disseminated.

This investigation is related to the tradition of 'the sociology of the text' formulated by Don McKenzie and Jerome McGann, by which texts are studied in relation to the social conditions of their production, circulation and consumption.[11] Robert Darnton's influential model of the 'Communications Circuit' is adopted, and adapted, here, whereby the role of each agent in the life-cycle of the book is considered in turn. Darnton argues that, 'Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural.' This is, as Darnton concedes, a 'large undertaking', but he argues that 'the parts do not take on their full significance unless they are related to the whole'.[12] Yet, Darnton's model does not register the hierarchies and power relations that define each stage in the communications circuit, although these seem fundamental to an understanding of colonial and postcolonial book production. In examining these various stages in the communications circuit of postcolonial African literature this book aims to foreground the impact of the globalised publishing industry on literature and authorship and address the role of the publisher in the commodification of postcolonial literature. My investigation is particularly concerned with the production end of the communications circuit and with the effect of local and international literary marketplaces on the creation of the literature in the series; a detailed investigation of the reading and reception of the literature in Africa is, however, beyond the scope of this study.[13]

Concerning authorship, I examine the patterns of assimilation and resistance in author–publisher relations, and propose that an understanding of the publisher's interventions in the other stages of the circuit shed light on the relationship between the African author and the British publisher. This relates to the long-standing debate about the 'profoundly complicit and compromised figure' of the postcolonial author,[14] a debate that dates back to the writing of Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral and Albert Memmi during the anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s.[15] In a postcolonial context, Ngũgĩ reflects on the alienating impact of international publication for the African writer. He argues that they face the dilemma of being cut off from their communities when they adopt European languages, or marginalised if they choose to write in their mother tongue.[16] Chidi Amuta also identifies the exclusionary practices in Western literature, the pressure on African writers to produce African exotica and the collusion of the writer in the process.[17]

The current critical consensus continues to suggest that assimilation is inevitable for African authors seeking acceptance in a globalised media industry. Pascale Casanova, in *The World Republic of Letters*, defines literary

assimilation as 'a process of fusion and integration',[18] and contends that it as an intrinsic aspect of international literary relations, which may be taken as 'applying to the artistic and cultural productions of all colonized or otherwise dominated regions'.[19] For her, assimilation 'often represents the sole means of access to literature and literary existence'.[20] Similarly, Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic* argues that: 'African writers through their dealings with western "agents of legitimation" are inevitably compromised, suckered into successive reinventions of an Africa that the white man has known all along.'[21] Brouillette's recent study, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*, proposes that contemporary postcolonial authors no longer resist or oppose the process of commodification by publishers, but consciously interact with the interpretation and reception of their texts. She argues that 'strategic exoticism and … general postcolonial authorial self-consciousness' now function as literary strategies and as marketable commodities in the global literary market.[22] I intend, through an investigation of the exact negotiations between Three Crowns authors and OUP, to reappraise these arguments in the light of close attention to publishing histories.

In terms of the editorial strategy for Three Crowns, my intention is to establish how OUP assumed a role as both gatekeeper and 'consecrator' of African literature in this period of decolonisation: how it attained the power to confer value on the literature, and what the implications of this were for the literature that was published. This study draws on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of the literary field and specifically his study of the role of the publishing industry as a cultural agency, as outlined in *The Rules of Art*, and in his essay 'The Production of Belief'.[23] I analyse the institutional framework around postcolonial literary publishing, using original archival evidence to examine the strategies involved in the symbolic production of the literature, the publishing systems of exclusion and inclusion, accreditation and textual circulation, and the means by which cultural and economic capital was conferred.[24] Although Bourdieu's theory of cultural production forms an important part of the theoretical background for this book, my aim here is to examine the relevance of his model (which was based on French literary publishing practice) to the specific circumstances affecting British publishers and African writers in the second half of the twentieth century.

To understand the nature of the postcolonial symbolic economy – specifically the cultural hierarchies operating in the UK and Africa in this period – I turn to Pascale Casanova's theory of international literary production. She proposes a helpful revision of Bourdieu's model in the form of the 'literature-world': an international literary space, in which literary domination is exerted by 'consecrated' nations upon other nations which are normally – but not exclusively – in an economically subservient position. Making the important point that a nation's position in the literary hierarchy can be gauged according to its level of autonomy in the production of

literature, she argues that a text's symbolic value is dictated by its place of publication.[25] However, the hierarchies identified by Casanova in relation to literary production might also be extended to literary consumption: the value of postcolonial literature was evidently determined by its destination market. I examine how the racially and geographically 'segregated readership', to employ Shafquat Towheed's term, affected the editorial strategy for the literature of the series.[26]

With respect to the design, production and publicity processes in Three Crowns, I consider the ways in which ideological and economic structures are manifested in the books' paratext – what Gérard Genette describes as the *peritext* (the publisher's interventions within the books themselves) as well as the *epitext* (the publicity and marketing matter circulating beyond the printed book) – to appraise how the material form of the books and the accompanying publicity influenced the interpretation and reception of the Three Crowns literature.[27] I examine how Three Crowns texts were shaped by OUP by means of filtering through the publishing apparatus and how the extra-textual elements of this postcolonial literature created specific forms of meaning. Through case-studies of the publication of Soyinka, Fugard and other Three Crowns authors, I chart the negotiations between authors and publishers that were manifested in the books' paratexts, and compare the texts and paratexts of their printed books, and the reception of the plays as performances and as published products, to explore some of the contradictions and ambiguities that emerged.

Regarding the sales and distribution strategy for Three Crowns, I question the widely held assumption that the Western market was, and is, the only significant market for postcolonial literature. Graham Huggan's thesis rests on the assumption that the main market for African literature was in the West, in his depiction of the Western publisher as an intermediary between the African writer and the Anglo-American marketplace, who is complicit in reinforcing 'stereotypical views of a romantic Africa of "primitive", even primordial tribal existence for the Western touristic reader'.[28] In his study of literary prize culture, James English writes that 'global markets determine more and more the fate of local symbolic economies'.[29] Casanova makes no mention of the significance of the markets in the 'literarily dominated nations' – the assumption being that only the markets of the 'centres of consecration' (in her terms, New York, London and Paris) are worthy of consideration.[30] Sarah Brouillette examines the impact of local readers on the development of postcolonial literature, but she still situates the 'global literary marketplace' predominantly in the West. She argues that, 'It remains the case that the expansion of the market for English literatures has been mainly an Anglo-American phenomenon. Products from a plurality of locales are incorporated into the central metropolitan locations of New York and (decreasingly) London.'[31] There seems, therefore, to be a general assumption in postcolonial literary criticsm that the most significant readers

of postcolonial literature are situated in Europe and the United States. This study aims to examine this assumption more closely, and to pay attention to the impact of readers of African editions of African literature in African schools and universities in this particular period. For, as Nourdin Bejjit's research on the African Writers Series also demonstrates, the African educational marketplace had a decisive influence on the emergence of African literature.[32]

In its concern to move beyond an exclusively textual reading of African literature, this book is thus part of a broader critical movement concerned with the institutions and processes behind postcolonial literary production, which seeks to reinsert the publisher as an essential part of the context for understanding postcolonial literature. Previous studies of publishers' interventions in the creation of African literature have, however, centred on the larger, more successful and enduring African Writers Series, for example by Bernth Lindfors (1995), Loretta Stec (1997), Camille Lizabarre (1998), Phaswane Mpe (1999), Graham Huggan (2001), Gail Low (2002) and James Currey (2008). Three Crowns, its poor relation, has been largely ignored.[33] This study demonstrates that the problems that inhibited the development of this parallel, albeit much smaller, series of African literature are themselves revealing, and in particular its turbulent editorial history offers an important insight into the pressures and constraints on African writers during this period. By focusing upon the publishing process for this series, the intention is not to diminish the agency of individual authors, or the influence of the individual literary texts. Instead, I aim to draw attention to the negotiations between African authors and their publishers, and the influence of transnational cultural and economic relations on the constitution of their literature.

Culture and commerce

Publishing is an industry that operates at the juncture between culture and commerce, or at the 'intersection of two axes of value', in Janice Radway's terms.[34] An essential and preliminary concern of this study is the relation between the commercial and the cultural in the work of Oxford University Press, and specifically in the Three Crowns series. How did the inherent tension between the literary expectations of the series and the economic imperative of OUP in Africa define the series?

Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between economic and cultural capital provides a useful vocabulary for understanding the work of the Press in respect to the 'culture/commerce dichotomy'. According to Bourdieu, publishers operate in one of two distinct fields: the restricted field of cultural production, 'oriented to the accumulation of symbolic capital', or the large-scale field of economic production, which confers 'priority on distribution, on immediate and temporary success, measured for example by the print-run'.[35]

However, a more complex relationship between different markets, or hierarchies of value, is usual in British publishing practice, where both strategies tend to be integrated within a single company: large commercial publishers have traditionally supported their prestigious, uneconomical lists through their mass-market commercial lists.[36] This study charts the way in which OUP developed an interdependent system of generating economic and cultural capital, involving the subsidy of the academic, Oxford-based Clarendon Press by profits from the London-managed educational publishing wing, which sold large numbers of school textbooks to African and Asian markets.[37] The principle was gradually established that the centre would be economically supported by the periphery.

Alongside this commercial imperative for its colonial expansion, I attempt to discern the nature of OUP's cultural mission in Africa. I examine how, under British colonial rule, OUP's mission was aligned to the Native Education agenda to 'enlighten the native about Western civilisation'.[38] This 'civilising mission' is regarded by Edward Said as an intrinsic part of the imperial process:

> inscribed within the humanistic enterprise itself … is the idea of Western salvation and redemption through its 'civilising mission'. Supported jointly by the experts in ideas (missionaries, teachers, advisers, scholars) and in modern industry and communication, the imperial idea of Westernising the backward achieved permanent status worldwide, but … it was always accompanied by domination.[39]

How, then, was this 'civilising mission' altered after decolonisation in Africa? I propose here that it was ostensibly modified into a duty to support African literature, scholarship and education, for the success of OUP in the independent African states relied to a great degree on the successful presentation of itself as an investor in the new nations rather than as a commercial enterprise. To protect its position in the independent states, OUP engaged in a publicity campaign, constructing narratives of redemption to describe its cultural mission in Africa. Thus, the London Publisher of OUP, John Brown, announced in 1970: 'The Oxford University Press has one purpose only, to advance scholarship and education. It publishes works of learning, and educational books, in order to achieve this purpose.'[40] In Said's terms, such narratives serve to disguise or obscure economic and territorial domination, thereby creating 'a justificatory regime of self-aggrandising, self-originating authority'.[41]

This study examines how Three Crowns was positioned within this 'culture/commerce' dichotomy in OUP. The Three Crowns editor, Rex Collings, conceived of Three Crowns as a 'new departure' for OUP. Arguing his case for venturing into the publication of African literature in 1962, Collings described his cultural ambitions for the series: 'Why should we publish?

We should publish because we want to expand our list to include original work of merit by local authors.'[42] The ideological and public-relations function of the series is addressed, and there is a discussion of whether African literature was envisaged as a means of deflecting charges of neo-colonialism. Collings aspired to challenge the existing strategy in Africa, and argued that literary publishing was necessary to compensate for OUP's lucrative educational publishing programme: 'I am convinced also that there is still a place for us in African publishing if we can plainly show that we are not in fact only interested in selling enormous quantities of primary schoolbooks by expatriate authors. Politically therefore it is also important that we should publish.'[43] The suggestion here is that culture should offset commerce in OUP's Africa publishing programme, and Collings envisaged Three Crowns as a series of high-brow literature that would operate in an international literary market. I question here whether his ideals were realised in practice: to what extent did the series have to function within the enduring colonial-style book-distribution channels in Africa? In examining how the Press represented its literary and economic enterprises on the continent, I aim to shed light on the strategic role of Three Crowns for OUP in Africa.

Researching publishers' archives

An array of accessible primary resources associated with the Three Crowns series enables a unique understanding of the economics of literary produc-tion, global copyright arrangements and privileges, political restraints and transnational author–publisher relations. The OUP archive is the most important source of information for this project. Editorial files contain author–editor correspondence, readers' and editors' reports on new manuscripts, author contracts, new title proposal forms, together with related internal memos, production schedules and print-run information, promotional materials associated with the individual books, copies of book and play reviews, and sales information. The Three Crowns series files also include financial records of the series and information about the strategy for Three Crowns, as well as details of debates about its continuation and the series reviews.[44]

However, an array of exclusions and occlusions is also evident in the OUP archive, governed as it is by commercial, legal and practical restrictions.[45] Most problematic for the researcher is the significant metropolitan bias of OUP's archival records, for the archives of the African branches have not been kept as assiduously as the Oxford archive: little remains in the OUP archive in Nairobi; nothing remains in Ibadan, and the Cape Town archive is not open to outside researchers. A selection of 'branch accounts' files in the Oxford archive, which relate to OUP's work in East, West and Southern Africa, provides limited information about the branches' publishing finances and annual reports, but offers limited insight into local editorial,

marketing and distribution strategies. Editorial files exist only for the books published in the UK, and there are no files relating to the Three Crowns books in the series published in the Ibadan or Delhi branches or the literature published in other series from African branches. Ann Laura Stoler describes the colonial archive as a 'cross-section of contested knowledge' that signals 'the very substance of colonial politics'.[46] Calling for a reading of the archive 'along the archival grain', Stoler writes, '[w]e need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake'.[47] This study has attempted a reading of the OUP archive 'along the grain', by considering which commercial and political agendas were served (and continue to be served) both through these records and through the omissions. However, the most significant challenge of this project has been to conduct research 'against the grain of the archive': to investigate the areas that are hidden from the official records and to draw on alternative accounts by authors, publishers, critics and, where possible, readers of this literature.

This study draws on alternative accounts by publishers in archives in Cape Town and Grahamstown, where two former editorial managers of OUP in Cape Town deposited their own records and correspondence. Leo Marquard's papers are stored at the University of Cape Town Library and David Philip's papers have been preserved in the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown, and include some additional papers entrusted to him by Leo Marquard. The National Archive at Cape Town includes important records relating to many of OUP's titles in South Africa, in particular those submitted to the Publications Control Board. In addition, this research has been informed by the West African theatre archival collection at the University of Leeds Library, deposited by Martin Banham, which is a rich source of records relating to the local production and reception of drama in Nigeria in the late 1950s and 1960s. Of particular relevance are the collections of correspondence, journal articles, theatre programmes and reviews relating to the English Literature Department in the University of Ibadan in this period, and the correspondence between Soyinka and Collings during and immediately after Soyinka's imprisonment.

This study has also used oral histories to help provide insights into the history of Three Crowns and of OUP in Africa. These include interviews with the surviving former editors of the series: James Currey, Jon Stallworthy and Ron Heapy, and with David Philip, former editor of the Cape Town branch, and David Attwooll, former editor of the Ibadan branch and editor of some of the later Three Crowns texts. Randolph Vigne gave a very interesting perspective on the publishing industry in 1960s South Africa, and email correspondence with James Gibbs has helped shed light on aspects of Collings's life and work. An email interview with Professor Dennis Walder provided important insights about the publishing of Fugard by OUP.

Outline

This book has two parts, and Part I seeks to survey the wide-ranging historical and contextual background to postcolonial literary publishing in Africa. This unfolds in four chapters that chart OUP's strategy in colonial and postcolonial Africa. It assesses how the Press balanced cultural capital and economic capital in their work, and how this tension was manifested as an opposition between literary and scholarly publishing versus educational publishing. The main objective of the first part is to review the effect of OUP's Africa strategy on the institutions of African literary publishing in general and on Three Crowns in particular. Part II is a detailed case-study of the Three Crowns series, which addresses its history and editorial strategy. It includes detailed chapter-length examinations of the publishing of the two major authors in Three Crowns: Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard, and shorter case-studies of many of the lesser-known authors in the series.

Chapter 1 charts how British publishers established a 'hand-in-glove' relationship with the British Colonial Office throughout East, West and Southern Africa in the early twentieth century: how publishing accompanied and supported British imperialism in this period. In addition, it reviews how the literary publishing strategy of OUP in British colonial Africa was embedded within its English-language teaching agenda through supplementary readers. The chapter concludes with an overview of OUP's policy for the independent African nations, to explore how the Press adapted its cultural and economic strategy in Africa after the end of British rule.

In Chapter 2 there is an examination of the economic significance of the postcolonial West African market for British publishers in the 1960s and 1970s. The chapter questions how the Nigeria branch of OUP managed to navigate its way through the conflicting demands of London and the local markets by reconciling two imperatives: the need to adapt to the new African nationalism to survive and prosper in the independent state, and the commercial imperative to provide unprecedented profits for the London business. There is attention to the literature produced for the African educational market, in order to understand the specific limits and pressures influencing the 'literary' publishing of Three Crowns.

Chapter 3 considers the publisher's articulation of its 'civilising mission' in Africa, with an exploration of the continuities between the work of the Christian mission presses and the work of the OUP branch in East Africa. There is a discussion of the way in which OUP's 'narratives of redemption' were reworked for a secular and postcolonial context, and the success of its mission is assessed, with reference to the branch publishing programme and to the literary output from Nairobi. There is an analysis of the hierarchies of postcolonial literary production that were established in the region, where OUP was a dominant publisher in the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 4 explores OUP's work in apartheid South Africa. Here, the tension between cultural and economic capital took the form of a conflict between scholarly publishing for the white liberal academic establishment and schoolbooks for Bantu Education. The chapter is framed in the broader question of the role of the publisher's history in South Africa as an aspect of its ideological positioning. It also touches on the implications of these developments for Three Crowns, which was used by editors as a means of continuing a liberal and anti-apartheid publishing tradition beyond South Africa.

Part II, Chapter 5 addresses the history and editorial development of Three Crowns. The series was the site of conflict within the Press, and its turbulent history was marked by a succession of financial reviews: this chapter considers how the inherent tension between the cultural expectations of the series and the economic imperative of OUP in Africa was manifested in the history of the series. The series was, as a result, rapidly deemed to be a financial failure, leading to a halt in acquisitions and the ultimate closure of the series. The chapter concludes by examining the ways in which, despite a lack of investment in its development, the series was an integral part of OUP's cultural mission in Africa.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the role of the publisher in judging postcolonial literature. It examines how the Three Crowns series editors grappled with creating a new African literary list, charting the editorial and managerial deliberations over the selection criteria for the series, and examining how the aesthetic and commercial value of the texts was negotiated. The chapter is illustrated by three case-studies drawn from the series: Léopold Sédar Senghor, Raymond Sarif Easmon and John Pepper Clark.

Chapter 7 examines the relationship between the editor and author in Three Crowns, and the processes of literary production. The chapter analyses various constructions of the Western editor of African literature as, for example, 'champion' or 'supporter' of the African writer or conversely as an agent of neo-colonialism. It then reviews the copy-editing of the series, the design and production stages, the marketing and promotion processes, with reference to four case-studies of the publishing history of Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin, Barbara Kimenye, Obi Egbuna and Oswald Mtshali.

Chapter 8 is a longer case-study of Wole Soyinka's early plays, which concentrates on the deliberations surrounding each stage of the publishing process, as well as the author–publisher relations that developed between Soyinka and Collings. It assesses the impact on Soyinka's books of OUP continuing to operate under colonial modes of publishing in the immediate post-independence period, and considers the ways in which the African educational marketplace had a decisive influence on the publishing of Soyinka, and how the racially and geographically stratified readership dictated the editorial strategy for Soyinka's plays. The chapter analyses the different paratextual elements created by the publisher – within the book and beyond – that influenced the reception of his works.

The final chapter addresses the creation of Athol Fugard's plays not as performances or as texts, but as material objects. It charts the debate surrounding the decision to publish Fugard in the Three Crowns series, and assesses the various transactions over 'Athol Fugard' as an increasingly valuable piece of intellectual property. The chapter draws attention to the sharp distinction in the way that Fugard's performances and published plays have been received, most acutely in respect to the plays published as the trilogy *Statements: Three Plays*.

In summary, this book aims to examine OUP's literary endeavour to 'represent Africa' and the commercial, ideological and discursive 'battle over Africa' that ensued. It examines the institutions of postcolonial literary publishing on both a macro- and micro-level, by combining an analysis of the historical, political and economic context of British publishing in Africa in the immediate postcolonial period with author case-studies. These case-studies explore the construction of literary value, the relationships between British publishers and African writers, and the critical importance of the African market for one of Britain's leading publishers. With regard to the book as a physical product, this volume addresses the ways in which ideological and economic structures are manifested in the paratext of the individual books. The main aim, then, is to address some of the broader concerns of postcolonialism through a study involving the precise methodology of book history.

Part I
Oxford University Press
in Africa, 1927–80

1
The Vision for OUP in Africa

> I have a vision … of Oxford African Primers in the hands
> of these squatting boys, in mission schools, in town and
> village, in bush schools far out in the blue where native
> teachers, only a little less heathen than their pupils, are
> struggling to make a greater Africa. This is not only 'uplift',
> it is also a sound business proposition, because each book
> will be paid for!
> – Letter from Eric Parnwell to Kenneth Sisam, 1928[1]

Eric Parnwell, 'Expert in Overseas Education' at OUP, first visited Africa in
1927 with the mission to seek out new markets for OUP and to identify
the new direction for the company on that continent. Parnwell's account
of his 'African tour' is an illuminating document, which articulated his
plan for a racially stratified publishing policy. His vision was for OUP to
undertake mass publishing of schoolbooks for African children across the
continent: a combination of a vision of a 'greater Africa' and a 'sound
business proposition'. This chapter examines how Parnwell's cultural and
economic strategy unfolded in South Africa and in the African colonies in
the twentieth century, and examines how OUP's strategy was modified in
the postcolonial period.

The British Empire was a captive market of vital significance to the British
book trade in the late nineteenth century.[2] The imperial book trade served
two distinct markets with separate sales channels: firstly, trade to the settler
colonies, which consisted largely of trade books for the white settler popu-
lations of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, and, secondly,
trade to the occupied colonies, which was predominantly in the form of
schoolbooks for the colonial education system. As the settler colonies
became self-governing dominions in the early twentieth century, British
publishers moved in to protect these markets and several larger publishers
established publishing branches in these countries: indeed, in the first half of

the twentieth century, the prosperity of British publishers came to hinge on these special commercial relationships with Britain's so-called 'free empire'. Most significantly, British publishers moved in after self-government in Australia in 1901, to ensure a continued commercial advantage: Macmillan led the way, opening a branch in Melbourne in 1905, and OUP swiftly followed in 1908. This business was dominated by colonial editions, which were series of mainly new British novels published in conjunction with UK editions and sold by British publishers to exporters throughout the empire and dominions.[3] OUP opened a branch in Toronto in 1904, and was followed, after self-government in Canada, by Macmillan in 1906. Publishers then, with varying degrees of success, attempted to follow a similar model in the other British dominions of New Zealand and South Africa.

The book trade to the occupied colonies was also significant for British publishers in the early twentieth century. British publishers enjoyed the protection of copyright legislation: the 1842 and 1911 Copyright Acts applied throughout the colonies, with the result that any book published in Britain was automatically entitled to be published in the empire. India, at the heart of the British imperial strategy, was the major book export market for British books. Priya Joshi describes the Indian book market as 'massively profitable' in the nineteenth century, and writes that 80 per cent of Macmillan's foreign book sales were to India in 1901.[4] The most commercially significant trade in schoolbooks was dominated by Macmillan, Longmans, Green and OUP. Macmillan opened branches in Bombay (1901), Calcutta (1907) and Madras (1913), and OUP followed suit, establishing a branch in Bombay in 1912 to produce Indian schoolbooks in the vernacular, and subsequently opening branches in Madras and Calcutta in 1915.[5]

In the early twentieth century, OUP also established itself as a major publishing authority on the British Empire. Rimi Chatterjee's detailed study of OUP's publications for and about India identifies the 'saleability of the other' at this time: 'the Press made its money interpreting other civilisations for the West'. She notes how OUP continued this tradition until the end of British rule in India: 'The old pattern of "India experts" in England writing books from the English point of view continued to be followed in London as the norm.'[6] Similarly, OUP played a significant role in what Said terms the 'codification of difference' about Africa in this period.[7] It was involved in the task of categorising and systematising the continent through amassing empirical knowledge: ethnographic, economic, scientific, geographic, linguistic and historical. OUP published such seminal works as Eric Walker's *Historical Atlas of South Africa* (1922), *The African Research Survey of Science in Africa* (1935), Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937) and *The Nuer* (1940), C. G. Seligman's *Races of Africa* (1939), T. R. Batten's *Africa Past and Present* (1943), Elizabeth Colson and Max Gluckman's *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa* (1951) and the *Handbook of African Languages* (1956).