

# PUBLISHING THE POSTCOLONIAL

ANGLOPHONE WEST AFRICAN  
AND CARIBBEAN WRITING  
IN THE UK 1948–1968

GAIL LOW

Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures

ROUTLEDGE



# **Publishing the Postcolonial**

Anglophone West African and Caribbean  
Writing in the UK 1948–1968

**Gail Low**

First published 2011  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

Simultaneously published in the UK  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, OX144RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2011 Gail Low

The right of Gail Low to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Typeset in Baskerville by IBT Global  
Printed and bound in United States by IBT Global.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known nor hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Low, Gail Ching-Liang, 1960-

Publishing the postcolonial : Anglophone West African and Caribbean writing in the UK, 1948-1968 / by Gail Low.

p. cm.—(Routledge research in postcolonial literatures ; 32)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Commonwealth literature (English)—Publishing—Great Britain—History—20th century.
2. West African literature (English)—Publishing—Great Britain—History—20th century.
3. Caribbean literature (English)—Publishing—Great Britain—History—20th century.
4. Literature publishing—Great Britain—History—20th century.
5. Authors and publishers—Great Britain—History—20th century.
6. Authorship—Economic aspects—Great Britain—History—20th century.
7. Publishers and publishing—Great Britain—History—20th century.
8. Postcolonialism in literature. I. Title.

PR9080.5.L68 2010

820.9—dc22

2010021703

ISBN13: 978-0-415-42435-6 (hbk)

# **Publishing the Postcolonial**

## POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

Edited in collaboration with the Centre for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies, University of Kent at Canterbury, this series presents a wide range of research into postcolonial literatures by specialists in the field. Volumes will concentrate on writers and writing originating in previously (or presently) colonized areas, and will include material from non-anglophone as well as anglophone colonies and literatures. Series editors: Donna Landry and Caroline Rooney

**Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures** is a forum for innovative new research intended for a specialist readership. Published in hardback, titles include:

1. *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* by Brenda Cooper
2. *The Postcolonial Jane Austen* edited by You-Me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan
3. *Contemporary Caribbean Women's Poetry: Making Style* by Denisede Cairnes Narain
4. *African Literature, Animism and Politics* by Caroline Rooney
5. *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* by Tobias Döring
6. *Islands in History and Representation* edited by Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith
7. *Civility and Empire: Literature and Culture in British India, 1822-1922* by Anindyo Roy
8. *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939: 'A Hot Place, Belonging To Us'* by Evelyn O'Callaghan
9. *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the body* by Michelle Keown
10. *Writing Woman, Writing Place: Contemporary Australian and South African Fiction* by Sue Kossew
11. *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* by Priyamvada Gopal
12. *Postcolonial Conrad: Paradoxes of Empire* by Terry Collits
13. *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* by Paul Lyons
14. *Decolonizing Culture in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction* by Susan Y. Najita
15. *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* by Minoli Salgado
16. *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* by Vijay Mishra
17. *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* by Neelam Srivastava
18. *English Writing and India, 1600-1920: Colonizing Aesthetics* by Pramod K. Nayar
19. *Decolonising Gender: Literature, Enlightenment and the Feminine Real* by Caroline Rooney
20. *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography* by David Huddart
21. *Contemporary Arab Women Writers* by Anastasia Valassopoulos
22. *Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton: Power Play of Empire* by Ben Grant
23. *Transnationalism in Southern African Literature: Modernists, Realists, and the Inequality of Print Culture* by Stefan Helgesson
24. *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa* by James Graham
25. *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* by Sharae Deckard
26. *The Idea of the Antipodes: Place, People, and Voices* by Matthew Boyd Goldie
27. *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation* edited by Sorcha Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson
28. *Locating Transnational Ideals* edited by Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio
29. *Transnational Negotiations in Caribbean Diasporic Literature: Remitting the Text* by Kezia Page
30. *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present* by S. Salih
31. *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory* by Dennis Walder
32. *Publishing the Postcolonial: Anglophone West African and Caribbean Writing in the UK 1948-1968* by Gail Low

Related Titles:

*Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics, and Self-Representation* by Bart Moore-Gilbert

For Sian and Stuart

# Illustrations

1.1	First page of Amos Tutuola's handwritten manuscript, <i>The Palm-Wine Drinkard</i> , with Faber and Faber emendations.	10
1.2	The facsimile page of Tutuola's original manuscript 'showing the publisher's "corrections"', printed in the first edition of <i>The Palm-Wine Drinkard</i> (Faber and Faber 1952).	16
1.3	Barnett Freedman's illustration for the dust wrapper of the first edition of <i>The Palm-Wine Drinkard</i> (Faber and Faber 1952).	19
2.1	Taj S M Ahmad's cover for the first edition of <i>The Lion and the Jewel</i> (Three Crowns 1963).	39
3.1	Dennis Duerden's cover for the first African Writers Series edition of <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Heinemann Educational Books 1963).	69
3.2	Pen and ink drawing (by Adenuga and adapted by Yunge-Bateman) for first African Writers Series edition of <i>One Man One Matchet</i> (Heinemann Educational Books 1965).	84
3.3	Cover of hardback trade edition of <i>One Man One Matchet</i> (Heinemann 1964).	85

# Acknowledgments

Material from the Amos Tutuola and Bernth Lindfors Papers at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin, is reproduced by kind permission of both the Center and Faber and Faber. Quotations from Amos Tutuola's correspondence to Alan Pringle and the image of the first page of the manuscript of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* appear by the kind permission of Yinka Tutuola; I am very grateful to Jare Ayayi for locating the Tutuola family and seeking consent on my behalf. Citations from the letters of Geoffrey Parrinder appear by permission of Stephen Parrinder. I also gratefully acknowledge permission of Faber and Faber to reproduce the facsimile from, and dust jacket of, the first Faber and Faber edition of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*.

Material from the Three Crowns papers and the Edward Kamau Brathwaite files at the Oxford University Press archives appear by generous permission of the Secretary to the Delegates of Oxford University Press, as does the Taj SM Ahmad cover for the first edition of *The Lion and the Jewel* (Three Crowns, 1963).

Material from the Heinemann Educational Board and African Writers Series Archives at the University of Reading Publishing Archives is reproduced by kind permission of Pearson Education Limited.

Material from the Jonathan Cape archives at the University of Reading Publishing Archives and the William Heinemann archives at the Random House Archives at Rushden (including the dust jacket of Timothy Aluko's *One Man One Matchet*) is reproduced by kind permission of the Random House Group.

Material from the Henry Swanzy Papers at the University of Birmingham Special Collections appears by kind permission of the BBC.

An earlier version of 'The Natural Artist: Publishing Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*' appeared in *Research into African Literatures* 37: 4 (Winter 2006), 15–33, reprinted by permission of the Indiana University Press. Small portions of 'The pleasures of exile' were first published in 'Finding the Centre: Publishing Commonwealth Writing in London—The Case of Anglophone

Caribbean Writing 1950–65', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 37: 2 (2002) 21–38 and is reproduced by permission of Sage Publications.

I am also grateful to Keith Sambrook, James Currey and Diana Athill for granting me interviews and for permissions to use and quote from these meetings. Every care has been taken to contact the relevant copyright holders prior to publication but if there are omissions, the publishers will be happy to rectify the mistake at the earliest possible opportunity.

The archival research work undertaken for this project would not have been possible without generous financial support from the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland; my very grateful thanks go to all these charitable organisations. The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas (Austin) provided a two month fellowship and access to the Amos Tutuola and Bernth Lindfors papers. The Arts and Humanities Research Council provided a semester's sabbatical that enabled me to complete the manuscript of the book.

My thanks also go to Bernth Lindfors, Femi Folorunso, Mark O'Reilly, Alison Donnell and James Currey who have all read and commented on sections of the book, and also to the archivists who have put up with my constant requests for information with such grace and patience, in particular, Jean Rose at the Random House Archives, Michael Bott, Verity Andrews and Brian Ryder at the University of Reading Publishing Archives, Martin Maw at the Oxford University Press Archives, Gabriela Redwine and Richard Workman at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. I am also extremely grateful for relations, friends and colleagues who have supported me and whose ears have been bent repeatedly during this book's very long gestation: Peter Kitson, Andrew Roberts, Nicole Devarenne, Keith Williams, Christopher Murray, Gordon Spark, Peter Easingwood, Jane Goldman, Marion Wynne Davies, James Procter, Susheila Nasta, John Thieme, Gemma Robinson, Rosa Michaelson, Jim Stewart, Gary Gowans (master digital craftsman!), Yvonne and John Simpson. To those who have kept faith with the whispered question 'have you . . . ?' I owe a special debt of thanks—you embarrassed me into completing the book! To Stuart and Sian MacFarlane who have had to live daily with the traumas and madness of my research and writing, I owe more than I can say.

# Introduction

From a survey of the publication dates of some of what are now canonical postcolonial Anglophone West African and Caribbean texts, one cannot help but be struck by the fact that many writers established their careers with books published in London in the 1950s and 1960s. Some were, of course, also self-published or published in little magazines in their home countries but their London publications created a noticeable stir in the metropolitan world of letters and helped establish their international reputations. Examples of these books in that significant cluster of texts include: *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (Faber and Faber, 1952), *A Brighter Sun* (Allan Wingate, 1952), *In the Castle of My Skin* (Michael Joseph, 1953), *The Emigrants* (Michael Joseph, 1954), *The Lonely Londoners* (Allan Wingate, 1956), *The Mystic Masseur* (André Deutsch, 1957), *Ways of Sunlight* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1957), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (André Deutsch, 1958), *Things Fall Apart* (William Heinemann, 1958), *Miguel Street* (André Deutsch, 1959), *Palace of the Peacock* (Faber and Faber, 1960), *No Longer at Ease* (William Heinemann, 1960), *The Pleasures of Exile* (Michael Joseph, 1960), *A House for Mr Biswas* (André Deutsch, 1961), *In a Green Night* (Jonathan Cape, 1962), *Arrow of God* (William Heinemann, 1964), *The Interpreters* (André Deutsch, 1965), *The Castaway and Other Poems* (Jonathan Cape, 1962), *The Lion and the Jewel* (Three Crowns, 1963), *A Dance of the Forest* (Three Crowns, 1963), *The Road* (Three Crowns, 1965), *Rights of Passage* (Oxford University Press, 1967), *The Mimic Men* (André Deutsch, 1967), *Masks* (Oxford University Press, 1968), *Islands* (Oxford University Press, 1969) and from East Africa, *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat* which appeared with William Heinemann in 1964, 1965 and 1967 respectively. A simple but obvious question that arises from seeing such a list is how did writers such as Amos Tutuola, George Lamming, Samuel Selvon, V S Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite and Wole Soyinka all come to be published in London? Who exactly published them and why? How did important educational series such as the Three Crown Series and African Writers Series emerge to find their writers and why were they published in these imprints? This book represents a first step in addressing these

questions through a necessary exploration of the publishing contexts that is crucial to literary histories of the postcolonial book.

The focus on the Caribbean and, in the main, on Nigeria in West Africa is deliberate. Though some of the writers mentioned will fall outside these geographical regions, authors from these areas of the world, now canonical figures in both a postcolonial and national corpus of writing, established their reputations in this period of literary history, and were, in the context and reception of literary publishing in the 1950s and 1960s, seen to be distinctive. As George Lamming was to write in 1960, the 'emergence' of a significant number of writers from the British Caribbean in the postwar period, 'with some fifty books to their credit or disgrace, and all published between 1948 and 1958' was something of a 'phenomenon' with 'no comparable event in culture anywhere in the British Commonwealth during the same period' (Lamming 1960: 29). The same can be said of writers from West Africa in the succeeding decade whose work 'came of age' in the 'high nationalist period' (Gikandi 2004: 392). Taken together as a postwar generation, this cohort of writers helped 'imagine' their respective national communities. Yet their intellectual labours entered an elite transnational literary circuit, and correspondingly, were transformed into textual commodities by the economic, social, cultural and institutional transactions that were part of an expanding print capitalism.

While the project ventures occasionally outside the period 1948–1968, for example in considering Henry Swanzy's role in the BBC 'Caribbean Voices' broadcast, or in my account of the demise of *Three Crowns*, these two decades are of strategic importance in a literary history of West African and Caribbean Anglophone literature. Not only does it take into account that creative burst of Anglophone writing from the Caribbean and West Africa, but it also explores the publishing contexts that supported such expansiveness. If decolonisation and independence movements brought about a creative outpouring of work from what was then the British Empire and the emerging Commonwealth, the unprecedented interest among the publishing and literary establishment in this period can be rationalised as a complex of responses including curiosity, concern, exoticism and opportunism. Writers were cultivated and sought after in overseas trips, and the extended cultural and educational networks that linked Britain, the Caribbean and West Africa aided the traffic of intellectuals and literary material. The creation of new Anglophone export markets for literary and educational texts fostered cultural connections at a time when political independence might have spelt the dissolution of colonial ties. The launch of the African Writers Series, for example, afforded Heinemann Educational Books, then a new and relatively small player in the postwar West African market, an opportunity to compete effectively with the bigger and more well-established companies such as Oxford University Press and Thomas Nelson. In her publishing memoirs, Diana Athill writes of the short-lived period in which British publishers

actively sought new writers from Africa and the Caribbean: 'Publishers and reviewers were aware that new voices were speaking up in newly independent colonies, and partly out of genuine interest, partly out of an optimistic if ill-advised sense that a vast market for books lay out there, ripe for development, they felt it to be the thing to encourage these new voices. This trend did not last long, but it served to establish a number of good writers' (Athill 2000: 205). Bookended by the Windrush migration in the late 1940s and the passing of the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1968, this project is also a first step in an investigation of how the 'internationalization of English literature' began (King 2004).

When cultural objects move from one site to another, there is increased potential for such objects to signify in ways different to their original contexts. The interest in West Africa and the Caribbean says as much about British cultural history as it does about the nationalist contexts of these Anglophone writers' emergence. In focusing on metropolitan publishers at this juncture in history, and in sketching an ambivalent and contested elite literary (and also resolutely hegemonic print space) that alternately attracted and repelled writers, I was intrigued by the 'enigma of authority' (Bhabha 2000: 137) that accrues to the status of books and book culture, coming myself from a culture and family that took book learning seriously as a stepping stone to social mobility.

This book is written as four distinct case studies based on investigations of publishing archives so that readers can find their way to the portions of cultural and publishing history that interest them especially. I have left the more explicit theorisations and discussion of book history methodology toward the end of the book so that scholars have a clearer sense of the conceptual underpinnings of my exploration of the archives. Since a detailed study of publishing archives is relatively new in the field of postcolonial literary studies, and the contexts of postwar publishing and our contemporary situation are very different, I have also felt the necessity of presenting new material—describing and accounting for publishers' series, publishing and editorial decisions—without overt attempts to prune them to fit postcolonial critiques so as to resist the temptation to homogenise different moments and contexts in a global traffic of books and texts.

The writing of this book has, of course, been influenced by current debates about postcolonial exoticism that have emerged from the provocative work of Timothy Brennan (1997), Graham Huggan (2000) and Sarah Brouillette (2007) and one of my goals is to enter into a dialogue with these critiques and to undertake an exchange that is based on empirical archival work and reconstruction. In their account of a postcolonial cultural industry, these critics have painted a picture of how texts are marketed and received as exoticised artefacts that promise access to non-threatening cultural others, either as syncretic hybrids or as indicators of cultural authenticity for an audience that prides itself on its cosmopolitanism. Thus in criticising the way that some postcolonial texts circulate in a capitalist literary marketplace,

Brennan (1997: 20) argues that 'the cultural products of the North-South literary détente' become 'synecdoches of the whole', and that 'what is required (and faultlessly offered) in confessional accounts of non-Western experience is a constant supply of local obscurities in small enough quantities' so as not to be too challenging or unpalatable. Huggan (2000: 33) presents the post-colonial exotic as a 'pathology of cultural representation under late capitalism', and remarks that struggles over the values attached to texts from the global South occur in a climate of a 'spiralling commodification of cultural difference' which encodes and transforms marginality into saleable goods. Brouillette, whose study examines how postcolonial writers have encoded within their own work a resistant self-consciousness that attempts to wrest agency back from the global literary trade in difference, makes her analysis in a context which is fully cognisant of how fiction and authors are branded, marketed and consumed in precisely those ways which lend themselves to Huggan's charge of postcolonial exoticism.

Brennan, Huggan and Brouillette deal with how texts and authors are valued. Thus a common theme throughout the four case studies that comprise this book—the emergence in print of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, the creation of the Three Crowns and African Writers Series, and the publishing of Anglophone Caribbean writers in postwar Britain—has been the examination of how, and in what terms, texts were valued by the metropolitan publishers who published them. I suggest how the value of texts might mutate as they travel from one culture to another, and how such evaluations may be delimiting or productive, or both. In the case of Amos Tutuola's rendition of Yoruba folk tales in a Nigerian English, Faber and Faber seemed, initially at least, uncertain as to whether the value of the manuscript of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* lay in the anthropological insights that it offered, or whether the journey undertaken by the main character in the novel, crafted (and also re-crafted by Faber and Faber) in a 'young English' (Lindfors 1975: 7), represented an imaginative endeavour that harked back to epic narrations of underworld journeys such as those of Greek mythology. If such ambivalences about the manuscript's importance and value paved the way for Tutuola's emergence in print, and Faber and Faber's representation of Tutuola as a naïve artist offered a way to juggle potentially contradictory views for a short period of time, they also created visible tensions around the question of textual 'authenticity'.

Equally, in my case studies in Chapters 2 and 3 on the creation of Three Crowns and the African Writers Series by Oxford University Press and Heinemann Education Books, we see how the postwar scramble for the African market in educational textbooks resulted in the creation of imprints that relied on, ostensibly, their projected aura of the 'local', a quality that defined both writers who were included in the series and the way that the series was presented and marketed. As these series are produced and owned by presses outside Africa, critics have likened the profits gleaned from the selling of

African creative labour to an African reading public to forms of exploitation such as colonialism or slavery (Armah 2006: 307–338). Nevertheless, the existence of both *Three Crowns* and the African Writers Series had important consequences for the dissemination of Anglophone writing within and out of Africa. In my account of some of the readers' reports and editorial correspondence on submitted manuscripts, and also from memos and letters relating to the packaging and marketing of these books, the difficulty of how to read and value such culturally and aesthetically diverse texts, and the issue of identifying niche audiences for books, turns on the problem of what was thought to be or was represented as 'local'. The marketing success of the African Writers Series, when compared with *Three Crowns*, points to a Series that was prepared to risk more in order to reap greater financial and cultural rewards in a crowded literary marketplace. Also, keen to take advantage of what they perceived to be a productive interface between educational and literary value, Heinemann Educational Books sought to combine the prestige of a higher-end hardback publication *with* that of lower-end paperback educational publication; their pursuit of such a strategy enabled the rapid attainment of critical mass for the imprint that was not based on scarcity or literary uniqueness primarily, but yet obtained much needed symbolic status for its publications.

In Chapter 4, my account of the publishing and dissemination of Anglophone Caribbean writing shows that what signified under the sign of 'local' or 'metropolitan' was at times inverted; the value that accrued to these terms was not only unstable but intertwined in mutually determining but differing communication circuits. The metropolitan BBC radio broadcast programme BBC 'Caribbean Voices', produced and transmitted from London, although instrumental in fostering a literary culture, was also seen by local Caribbean groups to be part of a colonial legacy, and some, particularly in Jamaica, objected to what they saw as foreign interference. But what was valued as 'local' in London and the Caribbean signified in both radical and conservative—productive and delimiting—ways, as is evident in the debates surrounding Henry Swanzy's promotion of 'local colour' and in his encouragement of regional accents. Later, in the appraisal of manuscripts from writers such as Derek Walcott and Kamau Brathwaite by their London-based general or trade publishers, and in the support rendered to early-career authors by a London-based cultural establishment, one can see how their work might have been perceived as an extension of literary modernism in ways that were different from, but also a development of, English literary traditions.

My concluding chapter, however, takes a different approach. Instead of looking at value from the position of publishers, this chapter addresses those debates from the standpoint of writers and the cultural worlds they came from. Specifically, the chapter explores authorship through an account of how it comes to acquire value in the contexts of Caribbean and Nigerian culture. I look at two literary examples of attitudes towards book culture

appearing in Anglophone West African and Caribbean writing. Using the novels *No Longer at Ease* and *The Mystic Masseur*, I explore how value, as such, is generated through the identification of modernity and social mobility with authorship, print and books in guises that lend a magical mystique and status to books and authors, thus creating a differential and elite space for subject formation. The chapter also affords me the space to discuss the conceptual underpinnings of this book, in particular the work of Pierre Bourdieu, which has done much to produce a sociology of art, and to ask if and how book and print culture in the Anglophone Caribbean and West Africa melded with existing structures and contexts in postwar London. Lastly, the chapter will provide some closing remarks on how book history might be useful to postcolonial literary studies.

This book is both an adventure in the archive and an attempt to encourage dialogue between the disciplines of postcolonial literary studies and book history. As books make the complicated journey from private idea to the public spaces of print,<sup>1</sup> the connections between publishing, cultural, educational and literary institutions—and individuals—are all crucial to understanding the processes of textuality and authorship.

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
1 "The Natural Artist": Amos Tutuola's or Faber and Faber's <i>The Palm-Wine Drinkard</i> ?	1
2 "Profitable and Politically Expedient?": Oxford University Press and the Three Crowns Series 1962–76	26
3 "In Pursuit of Literary Gold": HEB and the African Writers Series 1962–67	58
4 The Pleasures of Exile: Publishing Anglophone Caribbean Writing in Postwar Britain	93
5 The Magic of Books: Authorship, Cultural and Symbolic Capital	121
<i>Notes</i>	145
<i>Bibliography</i>	167
<i>Index</i>	175

# 1 'The Natural Artist'

## Amos Tutuola or Faber and Faber's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*?

*It seemed to me and to many of us to be a terrifying but quite fascinating book and we felt that we oughtn't to let it slip. What the reviewers will say about it I cannot imagine, but it will be more than interesting to see how they take it. It is many a long day since I have looked forward to the press for a book more than this one!*

Richard De La Mare, Faber

*I am rather apprehensive of Mr Tutuola turning out a Problem Child. He promises a sequel . . . I fear [however] that the public appetite for this line of fiction may be satisfied with one book. (One would not have wanted a series of successors to *The Young Visitors*).*

T S Eliot, Faber<sup>1</sup>

The West African writer Amos Tutuola burst onto the postwar metropolitan literary scene with *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* published by Faber and Faber in 1952. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* provoked controversy for its episodic rendering of Yoruba folktales in non-standard English. British reviews of the book at the time of its publication were generally, if not uniformly, positive. In his famous *Observer* review, the poet Dylan Thomas wrote warmly of the 'brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story' written in 'young English' by a West African (Lindfors 1975: 7). Many others shared Thomas's assessment. Arthur Calder-Marshall's *Listener* review proclaimed that such a 'very curious' text had 'much in common with other primitive literature'. However, he added, the book's presentation of 'Africanness' was made distinctive 'by the author incorporating into myth the paraphernalia of modern life, such as telephones, bombs and railways'. In Calder-Marshall's view, such a text 'herald[ed] . . . the dawn of Nigerian literature' (Lindfors 1975: 9). Michael Swan's *London Magazine* review was written with a nod towards primitivism recently made fashionable in the visual arts; Swan (1954: 94) wrote that Tutuola possessed 'the vision of the pagan bushman setting down the ancient sagas of his people with his own additions', and that European readers could not fail to be impressed (and reminded) that the author was himself 'from the area of the superb classical bronze heads of Ife and the advanced art of Benin.' The American literary reception of the novel echoed that of the