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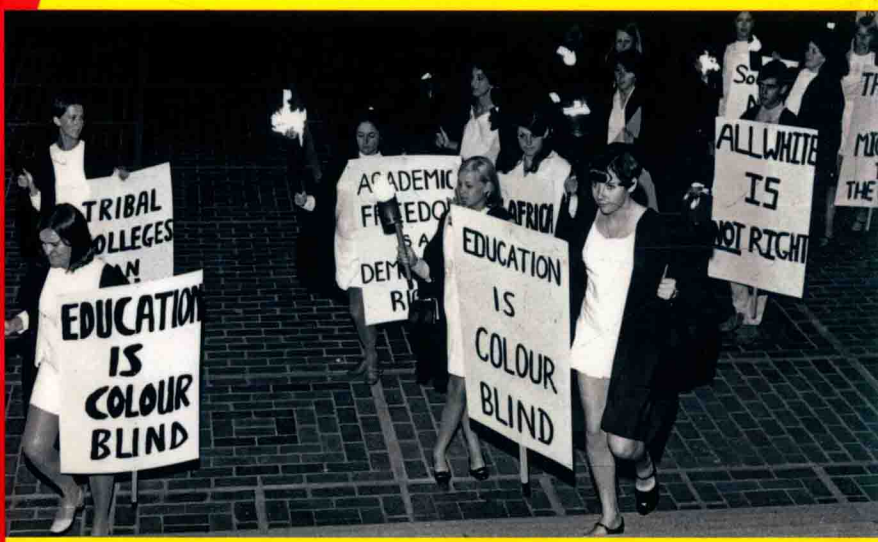
A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY PRESSES IN APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Between Complicity and Resistance

Elizabeth le Roux



BRILL *Series edited by* Michael B. Winship

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BRILL

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Le Roux, E. (Elizabeth), author.
A social history of the university presses in apartheid South Africa between complicity and resistance / by Elizabeth le Roux.
pages cm -- (Library of the written word ; 43) (The industrial world ; volume 4)
ISBN 978-90-04-29347-2 (hardback : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-90-04-29348-9 (e-book) 1. University presses--South Africa. 2. Scholarly publishing--South Africa. 3. Scholarly publishing--Political aspects--South Africa. I. Title. II. Series: Library of the written word ; 43. III. Series: Library of the written word. Industrial world ; v. 4.
Z286.U54L4 2015
070.5'940968--dc23

2015032458

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1874-4834
ISBN 978-90-04-29347-2 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-29348-9 (e-book)

PRINTED BY DRUKKERIJ WILCO B.V. - AMERSFOORT, THE NETHERLANDS

A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa

Library of the Written Word

VOLUME 43

The Industrial World

VOLUME 4

This work is dedicated to Steven and Juliette

Acknowledgements

This book was based on my PhD research, which was supported and encouraged by a few important people. The first is Peter McDonald, as without his openness and willingness to discuss ideas, this research might never have got off the ground. He provided a spark during a SHARP conference in 2008. The other main intellectual sparks came from Pierre Hugo and the work of Nicholas Basbanes. The most significant support came from my supervisor, Archie Dick. His knowledge, wide reading and ability to pull together disparate strands of research proved invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for his expertise, kindness and passion. The University of Pretoria provided a fertile environment for research as well as financial resources during my PhD studies.

The book was greatly improved by the assistance of David van der Merwe, for translating my (very wordy) ideas into clear, concise diagrams. It also benefitted from the close attention of my two critical readers, Margaret Labuschagne and Laetitia Cassells.

Without the support of university archives, this research would not have been possible. I would thus like to thank the archivists at each of the institutions and key people at the university presses themselves: Manoko Mohale at the Wits Corporate Archives and Veronica Klipp of Wits University Press; Marie Coetzee at the Unisa Archives and Sharon Boshoff at Unisa Press; and Carol Davis at the UKZN archives in Pietermaritzburg as well as Debra Primo at UKZN Press. The university presses kindly gave permission for the use of the images reproduced in this book. Philip Clarke, the Africana and Rare Books Librarian at Fort Hare University, and Thomas Jeffery at the National English Literary Museum, were helpful although they could not provide many additional archival sources. Thanks to the many other members of staff at the university presses and the former Publications Committee members who shared their memories and expertise with me. I would also like to acknowledge DISA for access to the full electronic archive of the journal *Theoria* and Taylor & Francis for access to *Bantu Studies*, *African Studies* and *English Studies in Africa*.

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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
AWA	African Writers' Association
FRP	field of restricted production
GIS	geographical information systems
IPASA	Independent Publishers' Association of South Africa
ISBN	international standard book number
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
NP	National Party
OUP	Oxford University Press
PASA	Publishers' Association of South Africa
PCB	Publications Control Board
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SANB	South African National Bibliography
SPRO-CAS	Study Project on South African Christianity in Apartheid Society
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal (formerly the University of Natal)
UFH	University of Fort Hare
Unisa	University of South Africa
UNP	University of Natal Press
VOC	Dutch East India Company
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WUP	Witwatersrand University Press

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins University is often quoted as noting that "it is one of the noblest duties of a university to advance knowledge and to diffuse it not merely among those who can attend the daily lectures but far and wide."[1] The diffusion of knowledge is the core function of the university press, which supports knowledge production through its scholarly publishing programme. Scholarly publishing is an important part of the intellectual life of a nation, particularly in the context of the knowledge economy. Some of the earliest publishing in South Africa may be classified as scholarly, and it was produced by the mission presses and publishing houses set up by immigrants to the Cape in the nineteenth century. For instance, early publishing efforts at Lovedale Mission Press included the first works of George M. Theal, who was to become a famous and influential historian in South Africa. Yet the kind of publisher most often associated with scholarly publishing, the university press, was not established until much later, in the twentieth century.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, South Africa followed a gradual process of decolonisation. The expansion of South African higher education after key decolonising moments – notably the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and even more extensively after the declaration of a Republic in 1961 – led to a sharp increase in the number of local universities, academics, and scholarly publications. This increase was accompanied by the formation of publishing divisions at some of the universities. These were the precursors of the university presses. University presses are often said to lie between the 'cathedral' and the 'market.'[2] What this means is that they have to balance the symbolic capital of knowledge production and the economic capital of commercial viability, to use Bourdieusian terms.[3] South Africa's university presses now find themselves in this position, but historically they were not: cushioned by subventions, they did not compete with commercial publishers, and at the same time, their role was more supportive and service-oriented than acquisitive or interventionist. In addition, the balance was complicated

1 Quoted in Chester Kerr, *The American University as Publisher* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949), p. 3.

2 Henry Chakava, 'An African Commercial and Textbook Publisher,' in A. Mlambo (ed.), *African Scholarly Publishing Essays* (Oxford: African Books Collective, 2007), p. 74.

3 Pierre Bourdieu, 'The market of symbolic goods,' *Poetics*, 14(1/2) (1985), pp. 13–44.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004293489_002

by a third pressure, which assumed overwhelming significance in this country: the political. The motivation of those opposing apartheid was neither profit nor prestige, but activism for the purpose of political change – a significant difference.

There are now four active university presses in South Africa, the earliest dating back to the early twentieth century. The Witwatersrand University Press (also commonly known as Wits University Press, or WUP) was established in 1922, and is the oldest university press in South Africa. The University of KwaZulu-Natal Press was founded as the University of Natal Press (UNP) in 1948, and the University of South Africa (Unisa) started publishing in 1956. Fort Hare University ran a press from the 1960s until the early 1990s, but is no longer actively publishing under this imprint, despite sporadic efforts to revive it. The University of Cape Town Press, established in 1993, is now owned by a commercial academic publisher, Juta. UCT continues to publish from time to time under the name of the university alone – as it did on occasion before the formal establishment of the Press – in addition to the imprint. The other South African universities also publish in their own name occasionally, but not through the channel of a university press.

These university presses emerged and functioned within a specific historical context. The development of education and of publishing in the former British colonies in general has followed a particular pattern, imitating the British models of universities and their presses. The South African experience of print culture is not unique in this regard. However, South Africa's Dutch colonialist experience had an important impact, too, not least on the late introduction of printing in this country – in 1796, after years of delay by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) – as well as on the promotion and development of Afrikaans. This mingling of colonial experiences has led to certain unique characteristics, which emerged particularly during the twentieth century, and in intensified form after the introduction of the apartheid policies from 1948 onwards. The history of publishing from that point onwards is marked by increased domination of the state and an array of repressive legislation, especially censorship or the threat of censorship, and increased segregation of the country's population groups.

The emergence of apartheid provoked a wide spectrum of responses, ranging from the extreme of collaboration and complicity, to the middle ground of silence and tacit acceptance, to the opposite pole of opposition and resistance. The universities fell between these extremes. With the imposition of the policies of separate development on the universities, certain academics and students came into conflict with the state. Between the poles of collaboration and resistance, the universities became a significant site for disputes around the

concept and practice of academic freedom. The history of those institutions and of their academics is thus both historically and politically important. But what of the freedom to publish, and especially the publishing institutions most intimately connected with the universities themselves – the university presses? Where did these presses fall on the scale of responses to apartheid, and how did they reflect their insertion in a wider social context?

To answer such questions, we need to look to the historical experiences of the publishing industry broadly, and of the university presses in particular. Because publishing is an important cultural industry, historians seeking sources look to its products as these form part of the record of our social and cultural history. These products, like the broader forms of records that are usually maintained and preserved in archives, make up society's "accessible memory" of itself.[4] However, less attention has been given to the history of such publishing houses themselves and to the potential sources for social history that may be located in the records of these publishers – the voluminous correspondence, financial information, manuscripts, policies, peer review reports, and so on – or to what John K. Young refers to as "cultural, social, and textual histories as reflected and represented through editorial theory and practice."[5] What South African publishing histories exist tend to have focused either on oppositional publishing or on the publishers that formed part of the Afrikaner establishment, such as Nasionale Pers ('National Press') and its subsidiaries. But, with university press publishing falling between these two extremes of resistance and complicity, it may have been ignored thus far due to a perception that it had little to tell us about either apartheid or the struggle against it. Perhaps as a result, this area has not been studied at all. In contrast, however, I argue that such publishing can tell us a great deal about academic freedom within a constrained society.

While apartheid had a constraining effect on freedom of expression in South Africa, this book considers whether, while some universities became known for an anti-apartheid stance, the university presses responded by playing a similarly oppositional role. Examining the university presses enables us to examine intellectual and political trends, and to consider to what extent academic freedom has been shaped or distorted by ideology. At the same time, the study of institutions like publishers or universities reveals many contraditions, as universities serve different audiences and accommodate a variety of ideologies at any one time.

4 Beverley Brereton, 'Models vs. Reality: Appraising publishing records' (MAS thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998), p. 1.

5 Young, John K., *Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth-Century African-American Literature* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), p. 185.

The Print Culture Context

Print culture has come only relatively recently to South Africa. The history of printing in South Africa dates back to the late eighteenth century, with the first printing press being installed in Cape Town in the 1790s. The first publishing enterprises started soon afterwards, developed by missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century to spread the Word more widely – with possibly the best-known examples being established at Lovedale, in the Eastern Cape, in 1823, and Morija, in what is now Lesotho, in 1861. Newspapers were also introduced, amid a climate of censorship and control, from 1824. As far back as the 1700s, the Dutch authorities in the South African colonies prevented publication that they considered subversive, while a century later the British authorities suspended publications for contravening a stipulation "not to publish material of a political nature."[6] The early censorship of newspapers and incidence of state intervention, as Oliphant points out, set the pattern for the future. He argues that, "[t]hroughout the history of South Africa, and with different degrees of intensity, the State would intervene to safeguard the interests of minority rule."[7]

Kahn has traced the origins of censorship legislation to the influence of English law, rather than Roman Dutch law.[8] The origins of South African legislation may be found in the Obscene Publications Act (1892) of the Cape of Good Hope, which aimed "to prevent the Sale or Exhibition of Indecent or Obscene Books, Pictures, Prints and other Articles."[9] In an echo of what was to come, the Act did not create an enforcing body but rather established powers of search and seizure: the Resident Magistrate could authorise any "constable or police officer to enter in the daytime" into any house, shop, room or "other place," using force where necessary, and to "search for and seize" any indecent or obscene publications found.[10] Further legislation, controlling the importing

6 A.W. Oliphant, 'From Colonialism to Democracy: Writers and Publishing in South Africa,' in N. Evans and M. Seeber (eds), *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of Natal Press, 2000), p. 111. Also see Adrien Delmas, 'From travelling to history: An outline of the VOC writing system during the 17th century,' in A. Delmas and N. Penn (eds), *Written Culture in a Colonial Context: Africa and the Americas 1500–1900* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2011), p. 116.

7 Oliphant, 'From colonialism to democracy,' p. 111.

8 E. Kahn, '*When the Lion Feeds* – and the Censor Pounces: A Disquisition on the Banning of Immoral Publications in South Africa,' *South African Law Journal*, 83(3) (1966), pp. 278–336.

9 Quoted by the Film and Publications Board, 'Censorship to Classification' (2010), Available online: <www.fpb.co.za>.

10 Ibid.

(customs acts) and distribution (postal acts) of publications, supported this authority. Before Union in 1910, each of the colonies making up South Africa was governed by its own legislation in this regard.

The oldest continuously operating (secular) publishing house was established as recently as the mid-nineteenth century, in 1853, by a Dutch immigrant, Jan Carel Juta. Several small, often family-owned houses were established in the years that followed, such as Thomas Maskew Miller's eponymous press in 1893 and the Central News Agency (better known as the CNA) in 1896. Early publishing in the Cape Colony was in a variety of languages, in English, Dutch and occasionally French and the local African languages, and printing spread throughout the British and Boer colonies before the Anglo-Boer War. But very little of what was published in the nineteenth century was in book form; rather, the focus was on newspapers and various forms of ephemera, such as almanacs, brochures, pamphlets, and blank order forms. As Anna Smith notes, "book-printing as such had to wait for the twentieth century."[11]

In the early years of the twentieth century, a few more local book publishers and then a number of international publishing houses began to set up shop in the colonies of Southern Africa. In 1910, the Union of South Africa was formed, and the nascent country supported Britain in the world war that broke out in 1914. In 1915, with the world still at war, Oxford University Press opened a South African office to distribute its books. In the same year, J.L. van Schaik began publishing locally and the Nasionale Pers ('National Press') was established. Just a few years later, in 1922, the first university press would be established, at the newly formed Witwatersrand University.

The development of publishing and other forms of media also saw the evolution of censorship legislation, with the Entertainments (Censorship) Act, No 29 of 1931 aiming "to regulate and control the public exhibition and advertisement of cinematograph films and of pictures and the performance of public entertainments," evidently in response to the distribution of new broadcasting media.[12] The Act also created a Board of Censors with powers to approve or reject films, although Kahn notes that "[l]ittle use was made of the statutory powers to suppress locally-produced books or other publications."[13] However, because this Act focused on the control of films and public entertainment, rather than publications, it was later felt that it should be expanded, to find ways and means of combating "the evil of indecent, offensive or harmful literature."[14]

11 A.H. Smith, *The Spread of Printing: Eastern Hemisphere. South Africa* (Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1971), p. 131.

12 FPB, 'Censorship to Classification.'

13 Kahn, *'When the Lion Feeds,'* p. 286.

14 Ibid.

At this time, although the early book publishers were beginning to make their mark, the vast majority of books, especially in English, were still imported. This was a common practice in the British colonies, which satisfied most of their publishing needs by importing books from the metropole. However, the pattern in South Africa was complicated by the multilingual situation, and in particular the strong promotion of Afrikaans due to the imperatives of Afrikaner nationalism: thus, on the one hand, "[t]he post-colonial period from 1910 to 1960 saw the development of a very strong publishing movement in support of the strong Afrikaner language nationalism which grew after the Anglo-Boer War," while on the other hand, "[m]ost books in English were imported from Britain, and most South African writers published in British publishing firms."[15] Afrikaans was promoted as a language through the activities of a number of newly formed local publishing houses, among them Van Schaik and the newspaper and book publishing groups of Nasionale Pers and Perskor (the latter an abbreviation of the Afrikaans term for 'Press Corporation'). A power struggle between the English and Afrikaans-speaking Establishment was reflected in the growth and development of publishing houses catering for these language groups.

Because of these unique factors – as well as the specific political circumstances introduced in 1948 (the coming to power of the National Party) and 1961 (when South Africa became a Republic) – the trajectory of publishing in South Africa diverged from the general Anglophone pattern. This pattern may be briefly illustrated by the Australian example: in that country, until World War II, the demand for books was largely satisfied by imports from Britain. The war hampered the circulation of books internationally, and widespread shortages of paper had a constraining effect on publishing in Britain, as well as other countries. For a number of reasons, local publishing began to grow and then to flourish after the war, emerging from what the publisher Allen Lane called an "absorbent phase" into a "creative phase."[16] The publishing industry continued to grow until the late 1970s, when a world-wide economic recession led to a downturn in local publishing, and the influx of multinational companies. In the 1990s, Australian publishing again experienced a resurgence, followed by a renewed dip, again linked to the effects of global recession, in 2009.

15 A.S.C. Hooper, 'History of the South African publishing and book trade,' in P.E. Westra and L.T. Jones (eds), *The Love of Books: Proceedings of the Seventh South African Conference of Bibliophiles* (Cape Town: South African Library, 1997), p. 72.

16 Quoted in Xuemei Tian, 'Book Publishing in Australia: The potential impact of digital technologies on business models' (D.Phil thesis, RMIT University, Australia, 2008), p. 16.

But the South African publishing industry was partially insulated from such world-wide trends. While other countries experienced a downturn in the 1970s, government support for educational publishing and for the promotion of Afrikaans publications created a counter-trend. Moreover, the impact of economic sanctions during the 1970s and 1980s and the withdrawal of a few multinational companies served partly to stimulate the local publishing industry, as certain publications could not be imported. Paradoxically, this may have had a stimulus effect on local publishing efforts. As Hacksley points out, "[w]ith the withdrawal of multinational publishers during the cultural boycott of South Africa in the late seventies, the influence of the old colonial models declined." The result was that, "[a]s more South African writers were published for South African readers, local voices became more audible."[17]

At the same time, the increasing scope of censorship affected the growth and development of new publishing houses. A Commission was established in 1954 to investigate the matter of so-called undesirable publications, under the leadership of Professor Geoffrey Cronjé of the University of Pretoria. Cronjé – a sociologist and criminologist who became notorious for his justifications of apartheid – would argue in his report in 1957 that "[t]he publishing of undesirable literature amounts to nothing else than abuse of the freedom of publication – for the benefit of the publisher concerned, but to the detriment of the community."[18] From this report and the ensuing debate on what constituted an "undesirable" book, emerged the first apartheid-era censorship legislation, the Publications and Entertainment Act, No. 26 of 1963. The Act created a Publications Control Board, which had the authority to prohibit "undesirable" publications, on the basis of the following categories (quoting from the Act):

- Is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to public morals;
- Is blasphemous or offends the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic;
- Brings any section of the inhabitants of the Republic into ridicule or contempt;
- Is harmful to the relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic;

17 Malcolm Hacksley, 'An Oppositional Publisher under a Repressive Regime: David Philip's role in the struggle for books,' Paper presented at 'A World Elsewhere' conference (Cape Town, 2007), p. 5.

18 Geoffrey Cronjé et al, 'Report of the commission of enquiry in regard to undesirable publications' (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1957), p. 1.