

## Chapter 4: Academic freedom and opposition: Towards a methodology

This second part of the literature review and methodological exposition for this study sets out to describe and analyse debates in the literature regarding academic freedom, and the activities and responsibilities of academics during the apartheid era. The aim is to develop a methodology for analysing and categorising the output of South Africa's university presses. The underlying assumption is that the role of the university should involve a commitment to the pursuit of truth and to the dissemination of knowledge. This sets the framework for considering the contribution of the university presses to academic freedom, since they are key disseminators of research. Some of the questions emerging in the literature relate to the responsibility of academics (and of institutions, such as the universities and their presses) in terms of academic freedom. In the literature, we find repeated tropes of victimhood, complicity, and collaboration, as well as resistance and opposition. Views differ as to how much dissent was tolerated and to what extent academics resisted or colluded with the system. By implication, there was a shifting continuum of possible responses to apartheid, and subject positions shifted over time and in differing contexts. This continuum is conceptualised in this chapter, and further developed into a methodological tool for the analysis of academic publishing outputs. Particular attention is paid to the potential use of categorisations suggested by, among others, Heribert Adam, Pierre Hugo, and Mark Sanders. Such a tool has not previously been applied in the field of book history or publishing studies.

An attempt is also made to extend the study to clarify the links between academic freedom and scholarly publishing, but as will be seen little scholarly attention has been paid to this issue previously, particularly in the South African context. For this reason, the literature review was extended to include a discussion of oppositional publishers more generally. This is of relevance to the university presses, because of the repeated assumption that they, too, played a role as oppositional publishers in South Africa. Thus, the discussion provides a valuable basis for comparison and discussion.

#### 4.1 The legal environment: Censorship

An understanding of the legal and punitive environment associated with academic expression and publishing is required, to create the context for the specific role of and effects on academic freedom of the apartheid era. The political sanctions associated with government censorship form part of the wider context of knowledge production as well as publishing. As far back as the 1700s, the Dutch authorities in the South African colonies prevented publication that they considered subversive (see Delmas, 2011: 116), while a century later the British authorities suspended publications for contravening a stipulation “not to publish material of a political nature” (Oliphant, 2000: 111). 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” (Oliphant, 2000: 111).

A brief review of the legislation associated with censorship may be helpful here. Kahn (1966) has traced the origins of such legislation to the influence of English law, rather than Roman Dutch law. 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” (quoted by the Film and Publications Board, 2010). 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 (Ibid.). Further legislation, controlling the importing (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.

This legislation was followed in 1931 by the Entertainments (Censorship) Act, No 29 of 1931, which aimed “to regulate and control the public exhibition and advertisement of cinematograph films and of pictures and the performance of public entertainments” (FPB,

2010), evidently in response to the distribution of new media. The Act also created a Board of Censors with powers to approve or reject films. Kahn (1966: 286) notes that “[l]ittle use was made of the statutory powers to suppress locally-produced books or other publications”. 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” (Kahn, 1966: 286).

A Commission was thus established in 1954 to investigate the matter, under 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 (quoted in Kahn, 1966: 291) 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”. From this report and the ensuing debate on what was “undesirable”, 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;
- Is prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare or the peace and good order;
- Discloses information relating to certain judicial proceedings.

If a publication contravened any of these provisions, it could be banned; the knock-on effects would penalise the publisher (for printing and publishing the material), booksellers and librarians (for distributing, displaying, exhibiting or selling the material), and book-buyers (for possessing undesirable and banned material). However, exceptions could be

made for scholarly publications, as they could be considered technical, scientific or professional publications for a specific readership, not for general distribution.

This legislation was amended a decade later, with the Publications Act, No 42 of 1974. The Publications Control Board was replaced with the Directorate of Publications. The categories that made up an “undesirable” publication were expanded, but the concepts of artistic or literary merit, total impact, and the author’s motive were also introduced as mitigating factors. The right to appeal against a banning was also extended. This legislation remained in force until the transitional era, when sections of the Act were repealed due to the Abolition of Restrictions on Free Political Activity Act, No 208 of 1993. Then, in 1996, the new Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996, was promulgated. This Act marked the end of the era of censorship in South Africa, as the terminology in the new legislation relates to classification rather than suppression. Notably, though, there may be new, post-apartheid attempts to reintroduce censorship, for the ostensible purposes of protecting state security.

In addition to the censorship laws dealing directly with publications, a host of other apartheid-era legislation could also affect the distribution of a book or the publication of an author. Essery (2005: 23) quotes Sparks as noting that “there were 120 pieces of legislation that one way or another restricted what could be published on pain of prosecution”. Oppositional publisher David Philip (1991: 14) remarked on the implications of this huge body of legislation: “If one were to actually read and take seriously the details of their legislation for instance on censorship and banned people, and the penalties for infringements, one would end up publishing nothing”.

With the increasing role of censorship legislation, and the wide powers of the Publications Control Board, censorship – and the threat thereof – was a real part of the context for any publisher in South Africa. Censorship can fulfil various roles in a repressive society, especially as regards the control of knowledge production, and has varying effects:

First, censorship is seen as an overtly political act whose tactics are linked to the perceived legitimacy and security of the State. Second, the very need for censorship is a tribute to the power and importance of rational thought and the written and printed word. Third, it is a clear contradiction of universally held concepts of the

purpose of a university and, in fact, constitutes a form of institutional violence against them. Fourth, cut off from a body of published work to varying degrees, academics have left the country, resorted to privatism, or acquiesced in the system and indulged in self-censorship. Fifth, censorship has contributed to a number of schisms. Within universities it has created a divisiveness based on actual or desired responses by different groups, but more importantly, it has opened up a divide between universities and the communities which surround them, diminishing their social relevance. (Merrett, 1991: 11–12)

Analysts (such as Du Toit, 1981; Hachten & Giffard, 1984) have noted that the two main targets of censorship were obscene and political publications, although the literature tends to highlight political factors. They also note the unsophisticated approach to banning, especially in the decade between 1963 and 1974, when “the authorities appeared to select targets on the basis of title keywords such as ‘black’, ‘socialism’, and ‘revolt’” (quoted in Merrett, 1991: 7). However, censorship was not always, and not only, overtly applied in the form of banning books. Rather, as Merrett points out, the authorities created a pervasive atmosphere of repression, while explicitly stating their support for academic freedom – two mutually exclusive categories:

South African censorship has had both its blatant and its subtle characteristics. The law has been used extensively to suppress dissenting opinion, and in the eyes of some this gave the system legitimacy. At the other extreme was the use of fear to engender silence and complicity, a fear derivative of detention, torture, long prison terms and the weapon of the freelance right-wing agent. A more subtle tactic was what Marcuse calls ‘repressive tolerance’. A certain level of dissenting discourse was permitted, enough to encourage an image of a reasonably liberal society, while the influential channels of communication were denied. (Merrett, 1994: 7)

In addition to such legislative restrictions, within institutions there was control of dissent. For a start, there was far-reaching control of the appointment of academics and the administration of the universities. At all the black universities, for instance, state strategy was to “appoint their own men, some of them recent graduates, invariably from the Afrikaans-medium universities, and promote them rapidly” (Balintulo, 1981: 150). A number of universities came under Broederbond control, directly supporting the Nationalist government. And pressure was also brought to bear to prevent the appointment of certain academics. For instance, at UCT in 1968, the government intervened to prevent the appointment of Archie Mafeje in the Department of Social Anthropology. He was to leave

the country as a result. A number of black academics were thereafter appointed on temporary contracts to avoid such government intervention.

Apart from such politically motivated repression, there was also a form of direct institutional repression, in which universities could apply punitive measures, or the threat thereof, to prevent academics from stepping out of line. While a certain measure of dissent may have been tolerated, any direct challenge to the institution or the government would not have been permitted. The political and legal sanctions against academics and against publishers, then, were both overt and covert.

#### **4.2 The universities and academic freedom**

*“... the history of the University is, with occasional periods of weakness and obscurantism, the history of freedom”.* (Hertz, 1906: 8)

The role of a university in society is closely linked to questions of knowledge production and of academic freedom. Even during the most repressive days of apartheid, academic freedom was tolerated, at least to some extent, at the universities. But this was not without limitations. In South Africa, the universities were subject to the same polarising forces encouraging a choice between acquiescence and resistance, as were other parts of society. This led to the politicisation of campuses across the country, and the growing involvement of staff and students in political activities (both for and against the government). There were also protests, although little concerted or systematic activity, against infringements on academic freedom. This literature review will focus on the debates around academic freedom during the apartheid period, and not on how the debate has changed in the post-apartheid era. It will also not include analysis of the academic boycott, imposed externally and somewhat inconsistently on the South African universities (a good source in this regard is Harricombe & Lancaster, 1995).

##### ***4.2.1 Debating the definition of academic freedom***

Academic freedom became an increasingly contested issue, along with the notion of institutional autonomy from government or political interference. The literature on

academic freedom in South Africa indicates that there is little consensus on the definition of the term, nor on how it has been applied in practice at the various universities. A much-debated, yet probably the most-used, definition is T.B. Davie's classic formulation of academic freedom in terms of the "four freedoms": the right of the university "to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study" (which has been widely quoted in the literature). Another useful definition is that of Sir Edward Boyle, who repeated the formulation used in the Robbins Report when presenting the 1966 Richard Feetham Memorial Lecture at Wits University:

For the individual teacher academic freedom means the absence of discriminatory treatment on grounds of race, sex, religion or politics, and the right to teach according to his own conception of fact and truth rather than according to any predetermined orthodoxy. It involves freedom to publish and subject to the proper performance of allotted duties, freedom to pursue whatever personal studies are congenial. (quoted in Bozzoli, 1974: 431–432)

The inclusion of the freedom to publish in such a definition is unusual, but this is otherwise a restatement of the so-called 'liberal' view of academic freedom. These definitions, which fall on the liberal side of the political spectrum, are also commonly found in the international literature (see, e.g. Horn, 1999). But there are also competing definitions of academic freedom from the apartheid period. Marcum (1982: 57), for instance, notes that "Afrikaner academics have traditionally seen the issue of academic freedom from a narrower perspective. To them it has meant the freedom to develop and safeguard a group's language and culture within its own academies. Thus they view academic freedom principally in collective, ethno-cultural rather than individual terms and are inclined to accept the need for conformity to certain *volk* values." This notion of collective or 'republican' academic freedom is the other side of the debate around definitions.

To some extent, academic freedom was enshrined in the acts establishing the universities themselves, as they contained what was known as a 'conscience clause', which protected staff and students from discrimination on the basis of their beliefs and opinions (Botha, 2000: 130). It could be noted that this clause was primarily intended to protect religious views, not political ones. However, as Greyling (2007: 58) notes, there was no such clause in

the acts establishing the black universities, which effectively “denied [them] academic freedom and undermined the status of the colleges as institutions of higher learning”. Another university that deliberately removed the conscience clause from its charter was Potchefstroom University, which asserted – even in its official name – that all academics should uphold “the Christian historical character of the university” (Ostrowick, 1993: 5). The University of the Orange Free State later also attempted to remove the conscience clause from its charter, but was unsuccessful (Ostrowick, 1993: 7).<sup>1</sup>

Apart from definitions, the literature largely focuses on threats to academic freedom. Academic freedom may be threatened by the state, by the academy itself, or by civil society (cf. Mittelman, 1997). While, in the post-apartheid period, the focus falls on threats to academic freedom from forces such as managerialism, commercialism, quotas and the shifting mandates of universities, in the apartheid period the aggressor was usually identified more simply with the state, with academics as victims. In other words, where threats are now seen more as internal factors, they used to be conceived of as external pressures: “Even those who do not simplistically confuse academic freedom with individual freedom of speech still tend to conceive it in essentially similar terms as a right to protection from external interference” (Du Toit, 2000: 97).

Academic freedom itself was not directly limited by legislation under the National government, but the effect of several other laws, along with a repressive atmosphere, combined to stifle such freedom. These laws included the Suppression of Terrorism Act, the Suppression of Communism Act and the Defence Act, in terms of which people who were seen to be provoking or inciting political action could be banned. “Inciting political action” was rather widely interpreted, and could be linked to the content of an academic’s lecturing or publications. The repressive measures enacted against universities that were seen as non-compliant included the firing and even arrests or deportation of liberal or anti-apartheid academics, a ban on staff engaging in political activity, and state appointments. During the 1960s and 1970s, especially, there were “severe restrictions on the

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<sup>1</sup> The policy and ideology of Christian National Education as such is not analysed in this study, but it remains an interesting and important aspect of the history of higher education in South Africa.



administrative autonomy of, and academic freedom at, the black universities” (Badat, 2008: 72). Merrett (1994: 33) adds:

There has been no better example in South Africa of the hypocritical semanticism of the post-totalitarian state than the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, which segregated university education, gave the state power over the appointment of staff, dismissals and curricula at state-run black universities, and prevented intellectual contact. It also empowered the rectors of the five University Colleges to control student publications and relations with the press. Staff were forbidden to comment publicly on any government department, and to engage in political activity.

The tradition of guarding academic freedom at South African universities against such threats has a relatively long history, dating back to when “liberal social scientists at Wits challenged ‘race’ as a scientific concept after the 1930s” (Murray, 1997: 252). Institutionally, Wits and UCT spoke out the loudest against apartheid and its limitations on their academic and institutional freedom, although there were academics and students at most of the universities who resisted to a greater or lesser extent. In 1957, in protest against the extension of apartheid policies to the universities, these two institutions published a booklet titled *The Open Universities in South Africa*. This booklet set out their definition of academic freedom, and has generally been perceived as an oppositional gesture; Du Toit concedes (2000: 82) that, “in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle from the 1950s the liberal discourse on academic freedom did have a significant oppositional function”. A follow-up document, *The Open Universities in South Africa and Academic Freedom*, was produced in 1974 (see Bozzoli, 1974).

An important aspect of the apartheid-era definitions of academic freedom is that they linked such freedom to institutional autonomy. With the state governing the universities through legislation, controlling their budgets through its funding, and bringing pressure to bear on various operational aspects (such as appointments of academics and admissions of students), higher education institutions were not particularly autonomous. Indeed, the essays collected in *The Open Universities in South Africa* booklet actually avoided criticising apartheid itself, but instead focused on the government’s “unwarranted interference with university autonomy and academic freedom” (*The Open Universities*, 1957). As will be

seen, in the absence of institutional autonomy, the selection and other publishing procedures of the university presses would also, of necessity, be constrained.

Academic freedom has also been seen as separate from institutional autonomy, however, and Andre du Toit (e.g. 2000) in particular argues that we should see it in a “contextual” sense. The 1957 booklet argued along these lines as well:

It is appropriate, however, to remark generally that academic freedom, like other ‘great, abiding truths’, is only ‘abiding’ in so far as each generation reinterprets and makes that truth its own. The concept of academic freedom is, like all concepts, subject to some reassessment in the light of changing needs and changing social circumstances, though the core of belief remains unchanged. (‘The Open Universities’, 1957)

If academic freedom is contextualised, then the role and responsibility of the individual academic assumes greater importance. This is why it has been so significant in this study to examine the individuals who managed the Publications Committees and ran the university presses; they had a direct influence on selection decisions and publishing philosophy – on access to the university presses, in short.

#### ***4.2.2 The responsibility of the intellectual***

In the literature, a debate may be found concerning the role and responsibility of the academic – usually referred to in broader terms, as the “intellectual” – and the university. This debate is encapsulated in terms such as the “public intellectual” (à la Habermas), “traditional” and “organic intellectuals” (à la Gramsci), and “movement intellectuals”, operating within a “culture of critical discourse” (à la Gouldner). This debate is largely located within the field of sociology, and specifically in what is known as the sociology of science or of intellectuals, although it also has resonance with the field of intellectual history. It has been argued that this sub-field “should be required reading for those engaging with the discourse of intellectuals and academic freedom” (Du Toit, 2000: 93). Du Toit (2000: 102) goes on to ask: “Can the university’s claims to academic freedom go together with a recognition that it can and must be held socially and politically accountable?” – and this is the key question framing the debate.

Many argue on the side of accountability, that academics have a social responsibility in addition to an intellectual one. Sanders (2002: ix), for instance, outlines a “theory of intellectual responsibility” in his work on the role of academics during apartheid, titled *Complicities*. Such criticism of academics tends to be associated with Habermas’s ideal of the “universal intellectual”, who is seen as having a responsibility to intervene on behalf of “rights that have been violated and truths that have been suppressed” (quoted in Sanders, 2002: 5). The American Association of University Professors stated in the mid-1970s that “[t]he college or university faculty member is a citizen and like other citizens, should be free to engage in political activities so far as he is able to do so consistently with his obligations as a teacher and scholar” (quoted in Hugo, 1977: 256).

This argument is also known as the “moralist” school of thought (Karabel, 1996: 205), and it is well summed up by Vaclav Havel, speaking in the context of repressive regimes and threats to academic freedom:

The intellectual should constantly disturb, should bear witness to the misery of the world, should be provocative by being independent, should rebel against all hidden and open pressure and manipulations, should be the chief doubter of systems, of power and its incantations, should be a witness to their mendacity. (quoted in Karabel, 1996: 205)

Similarly, Robert Birley has made a strong appeal for the importance of intellectual dissent in a repressive society:

It is certainly not the business of a university to become a kind of unofficial political Opposition. But this does not mean that it should ignore what happens in the world outside it. The fate of the German universities in the 1930s should be a warning to us. They believed that, as long as they preserved the right of free research and free teaching within their own walls, they did not need to concern themselves about what else was happening in their country. As a result, they did nothing to oppose the rise to power of a political party which made it quite clear that it intended to destroy the academic freedom which the universities enjoyed. I should say that a university today should be deeply concerned about the denial of justice beyond its own walls. (quoted in Bozzoli, 1974: 433)

Karabel examines what makes academics choose one side or another, if they accept their “moralist” position as having a social responsibility: “A key question, then, is why some

intellectuals align themselves with the forces of ‘revolution’ while others take the side of ‘continuity’ and of ‘reaction’” (Karabel, 1996: 206). It is interesting, then, that he does not assume that social responsibility and resistance to the government are necessarily coterminous. He continues:

... those who occupy dominant positions within their respective spheres share an obvious interest in the status quo. It is thus misleading to assume, as does much of the existing literature, that intellectuals will typically adopt an oppositional stance towards the existing order; most of them have, after all, attained a relatively privileged position within it, and their well-being often depends upon the acquisition of resources controlled by political and economic elites with whom they are socially and culturally linked. (Karabel, 1996: 209)

Indeed, it appears from the sociological literature that specific circumstances lend themselves to political opposition rather than accommodation. These may be summarised as the following (derived from Karabel, 1996 and other sources):

1. The presence of well-organised and politically radical social groups, such as opposing political parties, working classes, or social movements. This was clearly the case in apartheid South Africa: “the country had a long and honourable tradition of civil rights advocacy based within the non-racial movement that became particularly prominent in the early 1980s with the founding of the United Democratic Front” (Merrett, 2001: 54).
2. The absence of a strong business class. It can be argued that this was the case for the majority of South Africans, if not necessarily the white minority.
3. A high ratio of ‘relatively unattached’ intellectuals to those employed by large-scale organisations. Such “organic intellectuals” could be found throughout the struggle movement, in exile, writing for the media, and elsewhere.
4. The presence of a moderately repressive regime that lacks the means and/or the will to stamp out dissent. While the apartheid government can be characterised as more than “moderately repressive”, there was room for dissent. Moreover, as Karabel (1996: 212) points out, “[r]epression and censorship typically antagonize important segments of the intelligentsia and fan the flames of discontent, especially when they are imposed in an inconsistent limited fashion”.

5. Weakness or divisions within the ruling group. The proponents of separate development were never entirely monolithic; rather, there were always shades of difference and division, as in the debate between Afrikaners who were considered as falling into one of the two political camps of the so-called *verkramptes* (conservatives) or the *verligtes* (enlightened).
6. When the state is unable to protect the ‘people’ or the ‘nation’ from economic, political, or military encroachments from other states that occupy more powerful positions within the world system. While South Africa may not have been invaded militarily (the apartheid government did spend a great deal of time and money on defending its borders and fighting proxy wars), the political and economic influence of the anti-apartheid lobby and the United Nations played a major role in creating an untenable environment for apartheid to continue.
7. The presence of sharp boundaries between social groups, including the boundary separating intellectuals from non-intellectuals (i.e. the ‘people’). The systematic exclusion of black academics from the historically white universities, and the class gulf between the educated elite and the masses are evidence enough of such boundaries.
8. The existence of historically-grounded cultural repertoires of resistance to authority. Colonial societies usually have some history of resistance to authority, and in South Africa there is a history (and in some cases an ongoing celebration) of such resistance: the Anglo-Zulu War, for instance, or the Anglo-Boer War serve as examples.

These criteria support Van der Berghe’s contention that “the optimum milieu for a creative intelligentsia is an unjust and indefensible society with a moderately and inefficiently repressive regime and an urban population living reasonably comfortably” (quoted in Merrett, 2001: 57). Moreover, resistance thus becomes a cornerstone of academic activity, as Edward Said argues: “To make the practice of intellectual discourse dependent on conformity to a predetermined political ideology is to nullify intellect altogether” (quoted in Higgins, 1998: 16). In such conditions, there was space, and even impetus, for academics to play their role as public intellectuals by resisting the state.

### **4.2.3 Scientific neutrality and the ivory tower**

In contrast, however, we have the opposing position, in which some would argue that it was *not* the role of the universities to become politically involved, and that, instead, academic freedom not only required but demanded a stance of scientific objectivity and political neutrality: “The freedom to pursue political issues and to promote political causes is not part of academic freedom; it is part of other freedoms such as freedom of speech which includes the freedom to hold and impart opinions” (Commission of Inquiry, 1987, quoted in Du Toit, 2000: 108).

This was the view of Theo van Wijk, Principal of Unisa in the 1970s and 1980s. He argued in favour of the university’s ‘independence’, and attacked those who, as he saw it, were attempting to draw Unisa into “the maelstrom of social and political movements” (quoted in Suttie, 2006: 290). The role of the academic was, in his eyes, “non-political”, as “a university should not pronounce officially on controversial issues, largely because individual academic freedom is protected by institutional non-partisanship” (quoted in Suttie, 2006: 301).

While Moulder (1977: 245) describes the literature on the idea of a politically neutral university as “sparse”, he has provided an overview and critique of such beliefs. Even the open universities agreed at times with such sentiments, though they appear to contradict their otherwise oppositional stance:

The open universities are not ‘political’, as is sometimes alleged. Indeed, taking a political stance and being committed to an ideology would violate the very nature of a university. Nevertheless, they have felt compelled to comment upon certain aspects of the society of which they form a part. They do so in the belief that universities can fulfil their proper function only in a society which respects academic freedom together with other civil liberties. Academic freedom is so woven into the fabric of human freedom that it is jeopardised by infringements of human freedom. (‘The Open Universities’, 1957: 46)

In contrast, many argue that such neutrality is impossible. Van der Merwe and Welsh (1977: vii), in their important collections on South African universities during the 1970s, deliberately note that one of the “pressing issues” which they seek to examine is “the extent to which a university can or should remain ‘neutral’ on public issues and government

policies”. Similarly, Bozzoli (1977: 194), writing in the same collection, rejects political neutrality as an option for a university, while Budlender (1977: 260) condemns the concept of a politically neutral university as a myth. Botha (2000: 124) goes on to elucidate that, “[t]he so-called apolitical character of the university becomes highly questionable when it appears that the university uncritically actively or tacitly supports a questionable political policy that sustains its own existence”.

Some have noted, then, that the position of academic neutrality was in fact a smokescreen for complicity with the government and its policies. They note that the apartheid state “provided the basis for considerable autonomy and freedom, so long as the university did not jeopardize this freedom by engaging in ‘political ideology and public action’ that would bring it into conflict with society or the state” (quoted in Higgins, 2000: 8). This position has received sharp criticism, for supporting apartheid policies simply by doing nothing to oppose them. For instance, Richard Turner wrote in *The Eye of the Needle*: “Their [the open universities’] pose of virtuous academic neutrality in fact means that they are efficient servants of the existing interest structure” (quoted in Taylor, 1991: 34). Beale (1994) supports this position, noting that “[r]ationalisations were also offered in support of a notion of science as apolitical and value-neutral, thereby freeing scientific communities of taking responsibility for the ends and consequences of their research”. Greyling links the issue to social change: “A university is a powerful institution that has the means to change society, but refraining from doing so when justice is being denied beyond its own walls and calling it university neutrality, is in fact acquiescence” (Greyling, 2007: 13).

Recognising the complexity of the situation, and the scope for critique from all sides of the political spectrum, Moulder (1977: 248) concludes that it is not clear when a South African university is being too political, and when it is not being political enough – a question that resists resolution. But these, then, are the theoretical intellectual and political positions available to the academic in a repressive society. What, then, were the responses of the universities and their academics to the effects of censorship and attacks on their academic freedom? And how can they be conceptualised, along a spectrum from complicity to resistance?

### **4.3 Between resistance and collusion: A methodological approach**

The key methodological instrument for this study, of a continuum of subject positions or intellectual responses available in the academic sphere, was developed out of the literature. It emerged that there was a need for such a tool to examine patterns in intellectual thinking, given the complexity of stances available. The use of a tool also enables a comparison to be made between institutions such as university presses, even though their environments may have differed, when applied empirically to the concrete evidence such as the actual knowledge production output of those presses.

#### ***4.3.1 Conceptualising the continuum***

In the field of political sociology, there has always been an interest in power and access to power. More recently, this field has been applied to the domains of science, research and higher education (cf. Frickel & Moore, 2006). These theories conceptualise power and politics, in this context, in the following way:

We thus see power, in part, as a variable function of actors' relative social location within more or less stable institutional configurations relative to the flexible networks that span those institutions; we see politics as collective action seeking to explicitly reproduce those configurations or, alternatively, to substantially change them. (Frickel & Moore, 2006: 10)

This is a useful way of considering the location of academics within universities, their intellectual responses, and their access to platforms for the publication of research findings, i.e. knowledge production.

The responses to the imposition of apartheid policies on higher education and the resulting restrictions on academic freedom were varied, falling along a continuum from resistance to complicity. Some have suggested that the responses can be simply divided along language lines, as in this study from 1969: "In their reaction to government policy as it has affected academic life, the White universities have sorted themselves into two groups, the one vigorously opposing the government, the other either making no protest or coming out in support of governmental legislation. This sorting has occurred along language lines, with the



English-medium universities forming an active opposition to the government and the Afrikaans-medium and Bi-lingual and Non-White colleges supporting the status quo” (Ashley & Van der Merwe, 1969: 287). But this is an over-simplification, as will be seen. Responses to apartheid were complex, ambiguous and even contradictory at times.

A system for classifying responses to apartheid has been proposed by political sociologist Heribert Adam (1977). He suggested six roles for the “dissenting academic” – apart from the additional roles of support for the apartheid government. These will be used to structure the discussion here, as well as when analysing the content of publications in the next chapter. At the same time, other models of political sociology and of the sociology and anthropology of knowledge were also examined and considered. Adam’s categorisation was considered more appropriate than other models, because it specifically addresses the subject positions of academics under the apartheid system and thus has direct relevance to the theme under study. Although it may appear rigid or static, the model does not assume the categories as stable or fixed in time, as do some theories of interest groups and political influence; rather, it allows for shifts on a continuum and for a greater level of complexity. Sanders’s (2002: ix) “theory of intellectual responsibility”, which he uses to explain the activities of individuals during apartheid, is of additional interest but does not accommodate the same range of subject positions as the model proposed by Adam. Finally, Pierre Hugo’s work (1977, 1998) on Afrikaner academics was used to supplement the ‘collaboration’ end of the scale: those academics who supported or at least did not oppose apartheid policies.

#### ***a. Privatism***

The first response of dissenting intellectuals, according to Adam (1977: 269 ff.), could be that of privatism. This term implies a withdrawal from active politics, and the selection of safe and non-controversial research and teaching topics. The position may also imply self-censorship. As an example, Adam criticises the absence of under-development of the discipline of Political Science at the English-medium universities during the apartheid era. As has been pointed out, various commentators depict academic neutrality as a retreat from responsibility, rather than a valid subject position.

### ***b. Exile***

The second response Adam refers to as exile, which may imply physical (voluntary or involuntary) exile in another country. Exile may also arise as the result of the ‘brain drain’ to better resourced countries. Adam describes the publications of exiled academics as often offering an unbalanced, emotional perspective, because of their removal from the local environment. Because this response takes the academic out of the local academic and political sphere, it is sometimes difficult to assess the contribution of such academics to local debates.

### ***c. Liberal retreat***

The third response is that of liberal retreat. Adam castigates liberals – largely equated with white academics – for the lack of realism in their “visions for the future”, such as a ‘colour-blind’ South Africa. He sees them as being increasingly isolated by black or radical academics, and as being peripheral or even irrelevant to the key intellectual debates. Their position is thus one of retreat from direct engagement with the political system. This is the position most often associated with the ‘open’ universities, and it was considered an important form of opposition during the segregation era (before apartheid) in particular. The concept of liberalism is thus ambiguous in the South African context, having both positive and negative connotations, depending on perspectives.

### ***d. Militant-radical stance***

The fourth response implies a confrontational stance from academics, who go beyond the ‘ivory tower’ to become supportive of politics. This stance rejects reform of the apartheid system, rather arguing for confrontation and (even violent) overthrow. Adam describes this as a moralistic position, which may see the academic as having the duty to be a “witness” to atrocities, for instance. This loose grouping is similar to what has also been described as the ‘revisionists’ and even the ‘radical revisionists’ (see e.g. Yudelman, 1975: 92). But, like exile, goes beyond the scope of the academic sphere and into the political sphere.

### ***e. Change through association***

The fifth response, while also envisaging the overthrow of apartheid, is far more gradualist in approach. This position enabled academics to attempt to reform their institutions – and

society – from within, but as both Adam and Hugo point out, this did leave them open to the threat of co-option. Such a subject position may thus be perceived as playing it safe and even as complicity, through tacit acceptance of the existing system. It is often associated with either English or Afrikaans white academics, who desired political change but were not willing to risk social or other forms of ostracism.

#### ***f. Political reform***

Academics opting for the sixth response cannot limit their reactions to the academic sphere. Rather, they become openly involved in what Adam calls “competing organisations”, such as political parties or civil society organisations. These academics cannot necessarily be analysed in terms of their research output, because they focused on a more popular audience and on community engagement. As in the case of exile and of the militant-radical response, this subject position is situated beyond the local academic sphere.

Adam’s categorisation may be extended by that of Hugo, in his examination of dissident Afrikaner academics. Hugo (1977) has categorised those who did not support apartheid and who wanted to promote academic freedom in terms of “apprehensive” and “cautious activist” academics, using Lazarfield and Thielens’ categorisation, in addition to the very small category of those who did protest, and the very large category of those who supported the status quo. The label “apprehensive” refers to those who may support a dissident view, but prefer to remain silent out of concern for the potential (especially personal) consequences – such as a fear of not being promoted, of research grants being withheld, of victimisation, and so on. This appears to be a sub-set of what Adam calls *privatism*.

Cautious activists, in turn, “do want to stand up for their convictions, but they become strategists who hold their ammunition for situations where the aims seem attainable, and make concessions on the issues which, in the present temper of the time, they consider undebatable” (quoted in Hugo, 1977: 251). They thus prefer to “reform from within”, and improve existing policies, in a form of gradualism. This supports Adam’s category of ‘change through association’.

A further category of intellectual responses that does not easily fall within Adam's classification is the Afrikaner notion of *lojale verset*, usually translated as either "loyal resistance" or loyal opposition". Dating back to the work of poet N.P. van Wyk Louw, the concept of *lojale verset* refers to the promotion of a culture of criticism among Afrikaans intellectuals: "Great criticism emerges when the critic places himself ... in the midst of the group he criticizes, when he knows that he is bound unbreakably ... to the volk he dares rebuke" (quoted in Sanders, 2002: 62). Sanders (2002: 203), in developing his conceptualisation of the complicity of academics during apartheid, refers to this concept as "responsibility-in-complicity". This concept has at times been seen as a critique of apartheid, and at other times as an apology for apartheid, but in either case it did not envisage political change, at least not to a large extent. The inclusion of such a category enhances the continuum under development, as it carries the potential intellectual responses through to the extreme of complicity, as opposed to the focus of both Adam and Hugo on dissent.

These additional concepts thus extend our understanding of Adam's model, specifically to that area of the continuum that was more complicit with or supportive of the apartheid system. In the section that follows, I will describe the potential responses of academics and their universities to the repressive context in more detail, using Adam's, Hugo's and Sanders's classifications, but in the order from most resistance to least. From this discussion emerges a potential methodological tool.

#### **4.3.2 Protest and resistance**

The position of political reform has been associated with certain institutions and academics to a greater extent than others, although it should be noted that radical academics and those who actively opposed apartheid could be found at both English and Afrikaans institutions. It has been argued that, "(d)espite authoritarian controls and repressive practices, social institutions may, on occasion, become sites of struggle and generate outcomes, which are contradictory to the interests of the dominant classes" (Badat, 2008: 75). Many of those affected by censorship and limitations on academic freedom were intellectuals, and particularly academics – although the student bodies of the universities tended to be markedly more radical than the teaching staff. The literature provides

numerous case studies of radical academics; Merrett (1994: 51 ff.) gives the examples of Eddie Roux and Richard Turner. While these are extreme examples, they do provide a sense of the risks associated with political opposition, even for academics.

Edward (Eddie) Roux was both a political activist and an academic. He is most renowned for his account of the African nationalist movement in South Africa in *Time Longer than Rope*, which was published overseas, in London, by Victor Gollancz (1949). (A newer edition was brought out by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1964.) An earlier title, a biography of S.P. Bunting, was first published by African Bookman in Cape Town in 1944 – also an oppositional publisher, if an early one. Having been a member of the Communist Party of South Africa, and still politically active and outspoken, Roux was subject to a banning order in 1964 which prohibited him from teaching, publishing, attending gatherings, being quoted or leaving Johannesburg. He died just a short time afterwards, in 1966. Even a book based on the life of Roux, *Rebel Pity*, was banned from 1971 until 1993 (Beacon for Freedom of Expression, n.d.). He also edited *The Rationalist*, which included contributions by dissenting intellectuals across the racial divide.

Richard (or Rick) Turner was a lecturer in political science at the University of Natal in the 1970s, and was a friend of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. Turner was banned in 1973 after publishing his book, *The Eye of the Needle: Towards participatory democracy in South Africa* (first published in 1972 by Spro-Cas, the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, which was the forerunner of Ravan Press, and then in 1978 in the US by Orbis Books). The book was withdrawn from distribution as a result of the banning order; although, technically speaking, the book itself was not banned, the effect of a banning order on the author was much the same. Turner remained a member of staff at the university, but was not allowed to lecture. After Biko's death in police custody in 1977, Turner was also killed in 1978, the victim, many believed, of a political assassination. Lawrence Schlemmer, who was closely associated with Turner and other radical academics, was present at this shooting, and was himself to receive death threats. His offices and home in Durban were later firebombed, in 1986.

Some areas of academic interest were subject to closer scrutiny and ran a greater risk than others. De Baets (2002: 429) provides a list of topics – a wide-ranging list, it should be added, and yet probably not comprehensive – that were likely to bring an academic into conflict with the state and to incur sanctions:

... contemporary history; the emergence of African nationalism (including the history of the various political organizations involved) in South Africa, South West Africa (Namibia), and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa; the development of Black Power organizations in the United States; and the history of communism and communist parties in Europe.

More risky still was a focus on the state itself, and in particular its security apparatus. An example of such a publication is Foster, Davis and Sandler's (1987) study of the legal and psychological basis of the torture of Internal Security Act detainees. The book contained first-hand descriptions of the methods of the security police. Merrett describes a statement by the publishers, David Philip – "as all the respondents were detained under the Internal Security Act the current emergency regulations do not apply to the publication of this book" – as "a classic example of imagination and courage in pursuit of the documentation of truth" (Merrett, 2001: 56–57).

A number of academics who wrote on such topics experienced harassment, banning and even exile. An example of a book that was banned was the radical work of history, *Three Hundred Years: A History of South Africa*, published by the New Era Fellowship in 1952. Written by Hosea Jaffe under the pen name Mnguni, the book was banned for more than thirty years, until 1984. The book was published as part of an opposition campaign against the celebrations of the anniversary of 1652, the year in which Dutch settler Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape. The author later went into exile in Europe. Similar voluntary exiles included the renowned academics Shula Marks, Harold Wolpe, Stanley Trapido, Frederick Johnstone, and Martin Legassick. The category of exile academics will not be described in detail here, because they did not to a large extent publish locally through the university presses; exceptions will be described in Chapter 5. They are also difficult to capture on the continuum because they are removed from the South African academic and political sphere.

Merrett notes that the student press also came under fire: *Varsity*, a newsletter at UCT, was suspended from 1967 to 1968; the editor of the *Wits Student* was deported in 1972; *Vlieg*, a literary magazine run by students and academics at the University of Pretoria, was banned by the Rector in the 1970s; and the *Wits Student* was again censored by the Vice-Chancellor in 1979. The University of Natal's magazine *Dome* was also strongly critical of the government and was often banned as a result, as was *Wits Wits* (a deliberate repetition and play on words). The printing press on which *Dome* was produced reportedly had to be moved around to prevent it being confiscated by the security police. Many academics also had their work censored, and Merrett attributes this to the reason that "...the South African government required intellectual suppression in order to survive" (Merrett, 1994: 197).

As state policy evolved, in the 1980s, universities and their departments became "relatively well-protected", and "the idea that academic freedom demands the academic responsibility of documenting state repression became more widely accepted in universities than hitherto" (Merrett, 1994: 147). Resistance could manifest itself in various ways: "The universities, as such, have limited their expression of dissent to academic writings, public meetings, and symbolic protests, so far as permitted by increasingly restrictive legislation" (Thompson, 1977: 290). Yet some academics suggest that there was very little oppositional *publishing* as such within academic circles in South Africa: "No intellectual journal exist[ed] in which opposing points of view are thrashed out" and there was no "deep-probing debate" across the political spectrum (Welsh & Savage, 1977: 144). They argue that academics avoided "the most socially relevant and historically significant questions about their own society" (Welsh & Savage, 1977: 145) – a clear case of privatism.

Significantly, a number of academics or intellectuals also resisted apartheid from outside the sphere of the university. In some cases, their opposition was simply too militant to be contained in the public sphere of an academic institution. Others opted for different vehicles for resistance and opposition, such as societies and associations. Their publications, while significant, did not follow the gatekeeping channels usually associated with scholarly publishing. Thus, to provide a brief example, Roux would publish an Afrikaans edition of *Why I Am Not a Christian* by Bertrand Russell on behalf of the Rationalist Association of South Africa in 1955 (Slater, 1996: 177). It was banned shortly thereafter, on the grounds of

blasphemy. Groups such as the Pasquino Society formed to oppose censorship, and although this society did not publish under its own name, its members – largely academics at Unisa – self-published the literary journal *Ophir*, amongst other works. Indeed, literary journals and so-called ‘little’ magazines like *Stet* were a significant outlet for oppositional writing and thinking (see Deysel, 2007).

#### **4.3.3 Compromise and complicity**

In spite of examples of activism and resistance, and overt support for academic freedom, the universities have received severe criticism since the end of apartheid for their perceived compromises and complicity. For example, the position espoused by *The Open Universities* has been criticised for not going far enough, and they have been castigated for accepting segregated admissions. Thus, the universities have been taken to task for not promoting academic freedom to a greater extent: “The debate about freedom of information should have been developed more vigorously in the universities, which have a dubious history in this regard. ... Their opposition to censorship may be described as ritualised liberalism, lacking a determination to pursue fundamental change” (Merrett, 1994: 198). This section thus fits with Adam’s categories of ‘liberal retreat’, as well as ‘change through association’, to some extent.

The open universities have also been criticised for hiding behind their liberal stance, and for not openly resisting the apartheid government. “The traditionally liberal or ‘open’ universities have brought pressure to bear from time to time, but this has been criticized as standardized liberal opposition to apartheid, which has not involved a call for fundamental structural change” (Merrett, 1991: 7). Moulder (quoted in Taylor & Taylor, 2010: 900) notes that during apartheid the English-medium universities were criticised from the right for protesting against the state’s contraventions of their university autonomy; but they were also criticised from the left for not protesting against the many other state contraventions of human freedoms. Greyling (2007: 172) notes that these universities “are guilty of collusion and acquiescence, not only to the government, but to the general prejudices of white society, which they reflected. The English liberal tradition, as well as the criticism of and resistance to apartheid that emanated from English-medium campuses, are useful



smokescreens to hide behind.” Similarly, Asmal (2002: 160) argues that the “majority of academics at higher education institutions quietly worked the apartheid system without questioning its premise, turning a blind eye to its injustices”.

It is thus “a straightforward sociological observation that although the open universities may have committed themselves to liberal values, their liberalism was filtrated through structures which were racially based . . . Theirs [white academic and administrative staff] was a liberalism which was qualified by their socialization into, and location in, a situation of racial privilege. In short theirs was a ‘racial liberalism’ ... This has meant that academic freedom has been compromised more than the liberal formulation could possibly imagine” (Taylor & Taylor, 2010: 900). Echoing the debates around the responsibility of the “public intellectual”, Taylor and Taylor take the argument further still:

It is our argument that what is required here is to see academic freedom as being tied to the virtue of intellectually confronting, exposing, and transcending the injustice of systemic white racism; and, at its core, this requires a public intellectual duty to pursue ‘a consistent and exacting universalism’ ..., a commitment not to shy away from the fact that even the formerly ‘open universities’ cannot be seen to be independent of and disconnected from questions of racial privilege and advantage for white people, oppression and exclusion for black people. For, decade after decade, the ‘open universities’ served hugely disproportionate numbers of white people, enabling cumulative advantages that have fuelled economic and social inequality. (Taylor & Taylor, 2010: 901)

This criticism may be summed up, somewhat harshly, in Mahmood Mamdani’s description of the open universities as “islands of privilege, in which intellectuals functioned like potted plants in green houses. They had intellectual freedom but they lacked social accountability” (quoted in Du Toit, 2002: 93).

Of course, the situation was more complex than the poles of complicity and resistance. Marcum (1982: 56), writing in the 1980s in the midst of apartheid, saw the situation with more ambivalence and as being more ambiguous:

The open universities do not claim to have a perfect record; they concede that survival as a liberal institution in South African society often demands compromises that they view as necessary in the circumstances but which may be seen by others as weakness. The generations to come cannot but conclude that our open universities

did not withdraw like the German universities in the 1930s, when Western values were destroyed.

Similarly, Mervyn Shear (1996: xxvii) has attempted to provide a more balanced picture of the open universities during the apartheid years; he “looks at the documented record of the University of the Witwatersrand in an attempt to assess its position on racial discrimination, its opposition to infringements of fundamental human rights in South Africa and its contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle and to the promotion and maintenance of academic freedom”. He concludes with an equally ambivalent, even conflicting view on the University of the Witwatersrand, particularly with regard to the extent to which it opened its facilities to all South Africans and “what its contribution was to the transformation of South Africa” (Shear, 1996: 275). It is interesting to note that he does not mention publishing at all as an oppositional strategy.

#### **4.3.4 Cautious activism**

The record of the open universities, with regard to academic freedom, is thus ambivalent, which is perhaps only to be expected given the complexities of the apartheid era. But what of the universities that were not labelled as ‘open’ or as oppositional in stance? The Afrikaner universities have been characterised as *volksuniversiteite*, which accepted the subordination of the university to the state (Degenaar, 1977: 165). On the whole, they appear to have remained silent in terms of criticising the government, although there were some pockets of dissent.

A generalised support for apartheid policies among Afrikaans academics has been identified in various studies: “The absence of protest from Afrikaner-oriented universities in the face of government action which, by implication at least, has curtailed their freedom in the matter of staff appointments and student admissions can be understood readily in terms of the basic outlook of their leaders to racial and ethnic relations in general and the whole matter of Afrikaner survival in the South African context” (Ashley & Van der Merwe, 1969: 291). This may be supported by the vote of confidence in the Nationalist government signed by a group of 1 500 Afrikaner academics in the early 1970s; an extract reads, “We herewith

declare that we give our active support to the principle of separate development” (quoted in Hugo, 1977: 259).

Moreover, while support for separate development was not found across the board, there was little overt protest from the Afrikaner universities. Criticism was often confined to *volkskritiek* or *lojale verset*, and remained within the confined circles of the Afrikaans academics themselves. Thus, Hugo also takes Afrikaner academics to task for their failure to resist infringements of academic and other freedoms more vigorously. He argues:

Can one account for the absence of an intellectual critique on the grounds that penalties imposed for dissent among Afrikaners were simply too onerous to bear? The silence of academics in many other societies would easily be explicable in these terms. No intellectual energy needs to be expended on an explanation of the compliant behaviour of academics in places like Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia or any of the worst totalitarian Twentieth Century dictatorships. In these places dissidence requires understanding more in terms of the dynamics of suicidal behaviour. No such sanctions faced white South African opponents of the government. Incarceration, banning or other serious forms of state penalty (passport withdrawal, telephone taps etc.) did not paralyse or even seriously occupy the minds of most ‘liberal’ white opponents of the Government unless they (people like Rick Turner, David Webster and Beyers Naudé come to mind) had become a severe thorn in the Government’s flesh by, for example, playing an influential role in black trade unions or in advancing the perceived interests of prohibited organizations such as the African National Congress. (Hugo, 1998: 52)

In other words, Hugo (1998: 53) argues that “[w]hite academics during the apartheid years did not face what Moyo ... in a related Zimbabwean context, has described as a choice between ‘survival and scholarship’”. He thus condemns Afrikaner academics for not standing up to the Nationalist government to a greater extent than they did.

#### **4.3.5 Self-censorship**

A tactic that commonly arose as a response to censorship and restricted academic freedom, which cannot neatly be classified as either resistance or collusion, is that of self-censorship (a sub-category of ‘privatism’). Merrett (1994: 195) describes the multiple effects of censorship on scholarship:

In the 1960s and the early 1970s, academics frequently referred to censorship's effect upon scholarship. For instance, it was blamed for the exiling of South African researchers and research; and the impoverishment of local work and the suspicion with which it was viewed overseas. The effective cordoning off of areas of South African life to critical study by apartheid led to the phenomenon of privatism, the choice of safe, conservative work of a non-controversial nature. Some academics protected their work from suppression by cloaking it in language only understood by a few fellow practitioners. This trend amounted to severe self-censorship.

It has thus been argued that self-censorship at the university was an inevitable result of repression, and that academics turned to this as a survival technique. Self-censorship refers to the voluntary or deliberate act of avoiding trouble with the law by researching or publishing only material that would not challenge the state. In other words, as André Brink argues, "the most important ally of the oppressor in the act of oppression can be the collaboration of the oppressed himself" (quoted in Merrett, 1994: 144). As Merrett (1994: 217) notes, this form of censorship "is rarely discussed, has never been properly analysed and in many ways defies empirical research" – it is, after all, difficult to describe a negative. He goes on to suggest that, "[i]n the 1960s and 1970s the aura of the state security system was enough to deter writers and academics from publishing material that was thought to be challenging. The threat was both psychological and real" (Merrett, 1994: 217). Yet, this phenomenon is almost invisible: "Whereas precensorship is often invisible to the public, postcensorship, aimed at the consumption of research products, is not: lectures may be boycotted or publications blacklisted, banned, pulped, or burned" (De Baets, 2002: 19).

Self-censorship may thus be used as a tactic to avoid conflict with the state, as well as to maintain relations with the community outside the university. It may be imposed by the publisher, as in the case of Leo Kuper's chapter in the *Oxford History* (described in greater detail below), or it may be a strategy used by authors, to ensure that their work can continue to be published and circulated, and to avoid punitive measures. Both kinds of self-censorship may be found during the apartheid era. For example, Peter Randall (1974: 76) of Spro-Cas and Ravan Press described how self-censorship could be imposed, giving examples from his own writing and publishing career:

Writers in South Africa have to be constantly on their guard not to offend against the galaxy of laws governing freedom of expression, with the severe penalties that may

be incurred by the unwary. In addition, it is an offence to quote banned or listed people, including almost every major black political figure of the past twenty years outside the separate development system, and most of the significant black writers of this and the previous generation. For example, Andre Brink in *Anatomy of Apartheid* (Spro-cas Occasional Publication 1) wished to quote the African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele but this had to be deleted by the editor before going to press. Similarly, Nadine Gordimer was unable to quote the same writer, and others who were relevant for her scholarly purpose, in *The Black Interpreters: Notes on African Writing* (Spro-cas / Ravan, 1973). Similarly, in the final Spro-cas report, *A Taste of Power*, I was unable to draw on the work of Dr. Rick Turner and other banned people. All the Spro-cas study commissions faced similar problems and were often frustrated by having to impose a self-censorship which inevitably affected the quality of their reports.

In terms of scholarly publishing, Welsh (1979: 28) provides an example of important research being carried out in South Africa, but not making it through the publication stage, most likely due to self-censorship:

Significantly, nearly all the universities stressed the need for research into the problems arising out of the racial issue. One of the projects funded was a study of the origins and incidence of miscegenation in South Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A more controversial topic in the South African context can hardly be imagined! It appears, however, *never to have emerged as a published study*. (emphasis added)<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Welsh (1979: 34–35) describes the self-censorship of academics before publication, especially in cases where researchers required permits from the Department of Bantu Administration and Development to conduct research in ‘Bantu’ areas and knew they would have to submit drafts of their writings ahead of publication. Savage (1981: 48) refers to “self-restraints” rather than self-censorship, but notes that this avoidance of sensitive areas of research was widespread during the apartheid period.

Self-censorship could be seen as an almost inevitable consequence of the restrictive environment. Welsh and Savage (1977: 139) note the “powerful segregationist norms in the white community outside” the university. But self-censorship can also arise because of the norms within the institution itself. Bourdieu has described the “university field” as being engaged in a “circuit of continuous exchanges”, and thus of manifesting “active inertia”:

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to imply that such controversial studies were *never* published, although the example given here did not make it into print due to gatekeeping practices.

“tremendous efforts are exerted by scholars in order to replicate their own methodologies, theories, and paradigms” (quoted in Berlinerbrau, 1999: 117). The effect is to create an insider culture, and to dissuade academics from venturing outside of what is considered acceptable. This could easily lead to self-censorship on the part of academics, and certainly also on the part of university presses. Developing Bourdieu’s thesis, Martin Bernal argues that “[u]niversity presses, on the whole, serve to constrict, not enlarge the flow of intellectual alternatives available to the reading public” (quoted in Ibid.). He goes on:

Control of university presses, and major influence over the commercial ones, allows academics supporting the *status quo* to ‘maintain standards’ – as they would express it – or, in other words, to repress opposition to orthodoxy. (quoted in Berlinerbrau, 1999: 117)

Allied with the tactic of self-censorship is what Adam, Merrett and others call ‘privatism’, which refers to “safe, conservative research of a non-controversial nature” (Merrett, 1991: 9). There are a number of references to these strategies in the literature on academics during the apartheid period. Marcum (1982: 55) notes that, “in the absence of a societal tradition of respect for Anglo-American values of academic freedom”, in South Africa at the time, “[t]imidity, safe scholarship and mediocrity [were] inevitable tendencies in such a climate of overt political pressure.” Others have spoken of a “a bias towards researching safe topics” and described how “academics have moved towards adopting an apolitical technocratic managerial role in serving the interests of the top levels of society” (Taylor, 1991: 41). This leads to the avoidance of certain, more controversial or politically charged research themes:

... the heart of the problem of social research in South Africa [is] the elimination at an earlier stage of the very questions which might lead to answers embarrassing to those who seek to maintain White supremacy. The simplest way in which this is done is by not addressing questions of race relations at all but joining in academic and intellectual debates which are concerned with other matters. (Rex, 1981: 19)

The problem has been identified within a number of disciplines – and, indeed, in other countries, with Fidler (1965), for instance, describing the avoidance of controversial work at universities in the USA and Horn (1999) revealing the practice in Canada. For instance, Garson identified this predicament among historians in South Africa, noting “the temptation

simply to cease asking the questions that can only be answered by using the censored material. The effect would be to leave whole segments of South African history entirely to historians working and publishing abroad only” (Garson, 1973: 6). Davenport, in 1977, observed that historians were “divided ideologically between those who supported the government and wrote appropriately packaged history and those who did not, as well as between those who believed class interests to be the critical motor of history and those who argued otherwise” (quoted in Carruthers, 2010: 385). Thompson (1977: 292) criticised historians and other academics for their resort to privatism:

The most fundamental problems in South African society are taboo subjects for open-minded, uninhibited scholarly research. To examine the titles of South African dissertations in history and the social sciences is to realise how careful the authors are to avoid issues such as miscegenation, law enforcement, and the role of the judiciary.

In turn, Taylor describes sociologists “play[ing] it safe; either through grappling with grand theory, dabbling with abstracted empiricism or juggling with future scenarios for a post-apartheid South Africa” (Merrett, 1994: 196). Slabbert (quoted in Budlender, 1977: 262) sums up the significance of the academic’s decision in this regard:

In South Africa especially there is a political difference in the decision of a sociologist to either teach on the growth of voluntary organisations in Scotland or the reason for a colour bar in industry in South Africa.

Van Niekerk (1987) has examined self-censorship in the field of law, and specifically law publishing, noting that its effects on the articles published in journals far outweigh the direct consequences of censorship, for instance in the known instances of direct threats made to publishers in respect of printing contracts and subscriptions. He blames self-censorship for the existence of an “extensive no-go area for academic scrutiny around a vast area of the justice domain ... [resulting in] a priori abdication of a role of academic dissidence” (Van Niekerk, 1987: 175).

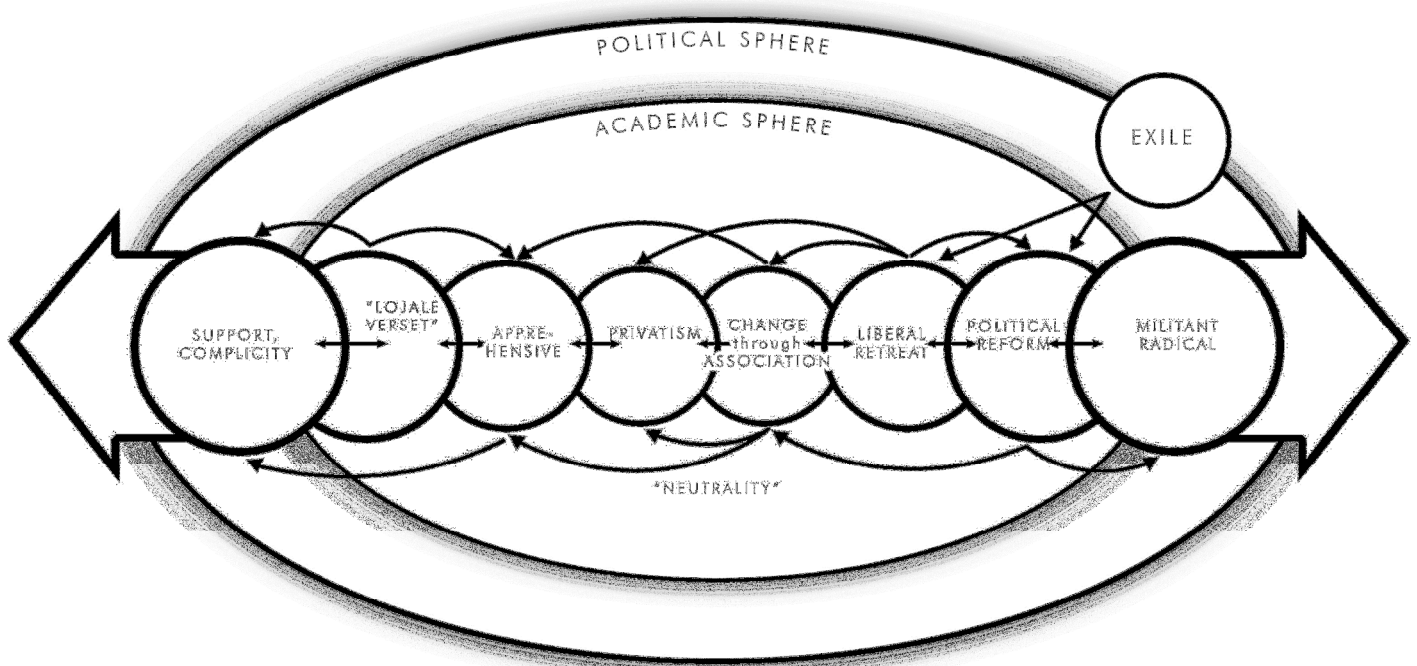
The significance of both self-censorship and privatism is that these may lead to more insular, mediocre research, which does not respond to the key issues of the day. More strongly, self-censorship is widely seen as cowardly and detrimental to good quality research. The

Academic Freedom Committees of the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand argued in 1974 that self-censorship and privatism had “undermine[d] high standards of scholarship” (quoted in Merrett, 1991: 9). As René de Villiers of the Progressive Party argued, “pre-natal censorship [is] ... the high road to mediocrity and to deadly conformity” (quoted by Merrett, 1994: 79).

#### 4.3.6 Depicting the continuum

From the above discussion, a diagram depicting the continuum of intellectual responses to apartheid may be developed (Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: A continuum of intellectual response in the apartheid context**



Source: Based on Adam, 1977; Hugo, 1977; Sanders, 2002.



The diagram depicts the continuum in a visual medium. Reading from left to right, the intellectual responses can be classified as moving from a position of complicity, through scientific neutrality, to radical opposition. The overlapping circles show that each position is characterised by a wide range of behaviour and of scholarly output. Moreover, as the arrows show, an academic's place on the model is not necessarily fixed; rather, it could shift over time and in different contexts, and responses could fall into more than one category at different times. It is important to note that some of the positions fall outside the academic sphere (notably the militant-radical and exile categories); they may thus be of relevance to a wider consideration of opposition to apartheid, but not to the intellectual responses from within universities. Academics at times would move outside the academic sphere to protest more openly or effectively. The model thus shows the extent to which the political sphere dominated the academic sphere.

#### **4.3.7 Application to publishing: The example of Oxford University Press**

The case of Oxford University Press in South Africa is an interesting illustration of shifts along the continuum. As Caroline Davis (2011) shows, the press went through a period where it balanced its list between academic publications, which were often oppositional, and educational textbooks, largely for the Bantu Education market. Under the direction of Leo Marquard, a Liberal Party stalwart, after 1946 a "tradition" of "anti-apartheid publishing" was established (Ibid.: 83). David Philip lists key texts from this period (from Philip, 1991: 11) as: Alan Paton's *Hofmeyr*, Edgar Brookes's *Civil Liberty in South Africa*, Monica Wilson's *Langa*, Desmond Hobart Houghton's *The South African Economy*, T.R.H. Davenport's *The Afrikaner Bond*, David Welsh's *The Roots of Segregation*, and Marquard's own *Peoples and Policies of South Africa*. OUP supported this clearly liberal publishing programme through educational publishing, in particular textbooks for black schools. As Davis points out, this cross-subsidisation led to an interesting contradiction in policy, between opposing the Nationalist government on the one hand, and supporting their segregated education system on the other. She describes the example of Bantu Education being "directly attacked in a publication that Marquard and Philip themselves commissioned and edited, Mary Benson's 1963 biography of Albert Luthuli" (Davis, 2011: 86).

Davis also describes how OUP became less oppositional over time, especially as the 1960s progressed. After Marquard's retirement in 1962, the impetus for oppositional publishing lessened while at the same time the government became more repressive. Under the more repressive legislative environment, OUP not only became less critical, but it also resorted to self-censorship. In a case which had a widespread influence on the South African university presses, the *Oxford History of South Africa* was published in 1971. Leo Kuper's chapter on 'African nationalism in South Africa, 1910–1964', given its theme and focus, unavoidably quoted many banned people and publications, and OUP feared the book being banned as a result. Merrett (1994: 62) summarises that "[t]wo years' work on primary sources resulted in infringements of the law regarding the quoting of banned persons and unlawful organisations, an inevitable consequence given the topic." The publishers' decision was to print two separate editions: while the international edition included the chapter by Kuper on African nationalism, the local edition contained only 53 blank pages where his chapter should have been.

This decision was not without strong criticism, not least from Kuper himself. He accused the publishers of acting in "the self-appointed role of surrogate censor" and of "committing an act of political regression", going on to argue that:

Such fears may be aroused that the self-censorship goes well beyond the strict requirements of the law. Often this self-censorship is not disclosed to the reader. The third stage is the enforcement of the censorship laws against writers by persons acting on their own initiative and not charged with that function by the government. It is a surrogate censorship which enormously increases the effectiveness of repression. It was this step which the Clarendon Press and the editors initially took in excluding my chapter. (Kuper, 1975: 50)

This is a significant criticism, especially given Kuper's standing as "probably the finest sociologist to have emerged from the South African milieu" (Lever, 1981: 255). Amidst much criticism, in a final irony, the publishers were later informed that the book would not be banned in its uncensored version:

The book, whose international edition included the missing chapter, was never banned. This was not required as the publishers had achieved the state's purpose through a blatant act of self-censorship. The South African edition contained a note of regret, but a statement by Kuper was not included. It was, however, published in

the international edition after ‘protracted and painful correspondence’ initiated by Kuper. A representative of the PCB, in explaining his body’s lack of involvement in the blank pages saga, said he found them so irritating he wished he could ban the book. (Merrett, 1994: 62–63)

David Philip (1991: 43), who was then a publisher at OUP and involved in the decision to publish with the blank pages, situates the decision within the highly repressive political context and the threat of sanctions. He explains that “[t]he supporters of the publish-and-be-damned argument were mainly outside South Africa; those in favour of publishing with the offending chapter blank were mainly inside the country. Who was right? I am sure only that it was a terribly difficult decision at the time.” This reveals the limited extent of dissent possible within the country at the time.

Some saw the decision as a courageous one, drawing attention as it did to the issue of censorship in South Africa, and opening up some debate on the matter. For example:

This [the OUP] episode starkly brings out the existence of self-censorship and several social scientists I have spoken to admit to having engaged in this practice. ... The testimony to the power of ideological control ultimately lies in the field of unconscious self-censorship: much of what could be termed the sociological imagination originates from the subconscious and ideas formulated there may be unconsciously suppressed by self-protective mechanisms. (Savage, 1981: 58)

The lasting result, however, of the *Oxford History* debacle was a withdrawal, on the part of the publisher, from politically oriented publishing. “By 1971, the parent OUP in England, evidently fearing for the safety and profitability of their South African enterprise, ordered the latter to withdraw from publishing texts on local history and politics and to concentrate instead on increasing the company's share of the growing market for books for African primary schools: in effect, self-imposed censorship, in accordance with the hardening apartheid ideology of the time” (Hacksley, 2007). Other commentators draw similar conclusions: “For nearly the next twenty years – the years of dominance of the apartheid state – Oxford University Press Southern Africa would no longer be regarded as oppositional publishers. They followed Longman into the African school market and concentrated again on being distributors of imported books” (Altbach & Hoshino, 1995: 418).

In consequence of OUP's decision to move away from critical academic work and towards educational publishing, in 1971, David Philip left Oxford University Press in Cape Town to set up as an independent publisher with his wife Marie. "Rather than allow the expression of alternative views to be silenced in this way, and believing in 'the truth of the imagination', David Philip cashed his pension and, operating together with his wife Marie, launched David Philip Publishers. It was their avowed intent to publish under the slogan 'Books That Matter for Southern Africa', by which they meant "academic books and serious trade books for the thinking public" (Hacksley, 2007). Oppositional publishing would henceforth largely be undertaken by independent publishers, outside of the academic sphere.

If we were to plot the position of OUP on the continuum (Figure 4.1), then it would clearly show a shift over time: from the relatively oppositional category of political reform, to liberal retreat, to self-censorship and privatism. But there were also multiple positions occupied at a single time, as described.

#### **4.4 Oppositional publishing in South Africa**

As has been shown, there is a constant interplay in South African history between repression and resistance, protest and complicity. In an oppressive context of this kind, an 'agent of change' (to appropriate Elizabeth Eisenstein's iconic use of the term, from 1979) would fall on the side of resistance. Thus, the 1970s saw increased pressure on freedom of speech, and a more constrained context in which to publish. For example, "[i]n 1948, 100 titles were banned by the new apartheid government; by 1971 this number had grown dramatically to about 18 000" (Suttie, 2005: 112). At the same time, opposition to apartheid intensified, and "[t]he choice facing publishers was between confrontation and capitulation" (Hacksley, 2007). A number of people chose confrontation through the medium of publishing, and thus several new kinds of highly politicised publishers were formed – such as David Philip, Ravan Press, Skotaville, and Ad Donker. With growing restrictions on what South African publishers could produce throughout the apartheid period, and especially increasingly rigorous censorship laws, a form of publishing that could be defined as oppositional emerged.

As the focus thus far in this chapter has fallen on the university response to the restrictions of censorship, the perspective now moves to the response from publishers, who disseminated the scholarship of the academics described above. Even while these publishers may be seen as operating largely outside the academic sphere which encapsulates the model elaborated earlier (see Figure 4.1), their emergence as an alternative publishing outlet for the most outspoken, dissident and radical academics in South Africa underscores their importance, in the absence of radical university press publishing. At the more resistant, oppositional end of the spectrum of responses, such publishers provided a significant platform for anti-apartheid voices. To examine them is thus to enhance the model, as it applies to university press publishing (see Chapter 5), as well as to provide a counter-example of committed, value-driven publishing. These were not publishers that would hide behind a screen of academic neutrality; rather, they saw themselves as having a social responsibility to transmit certain values and ideologies through the medium of their books.

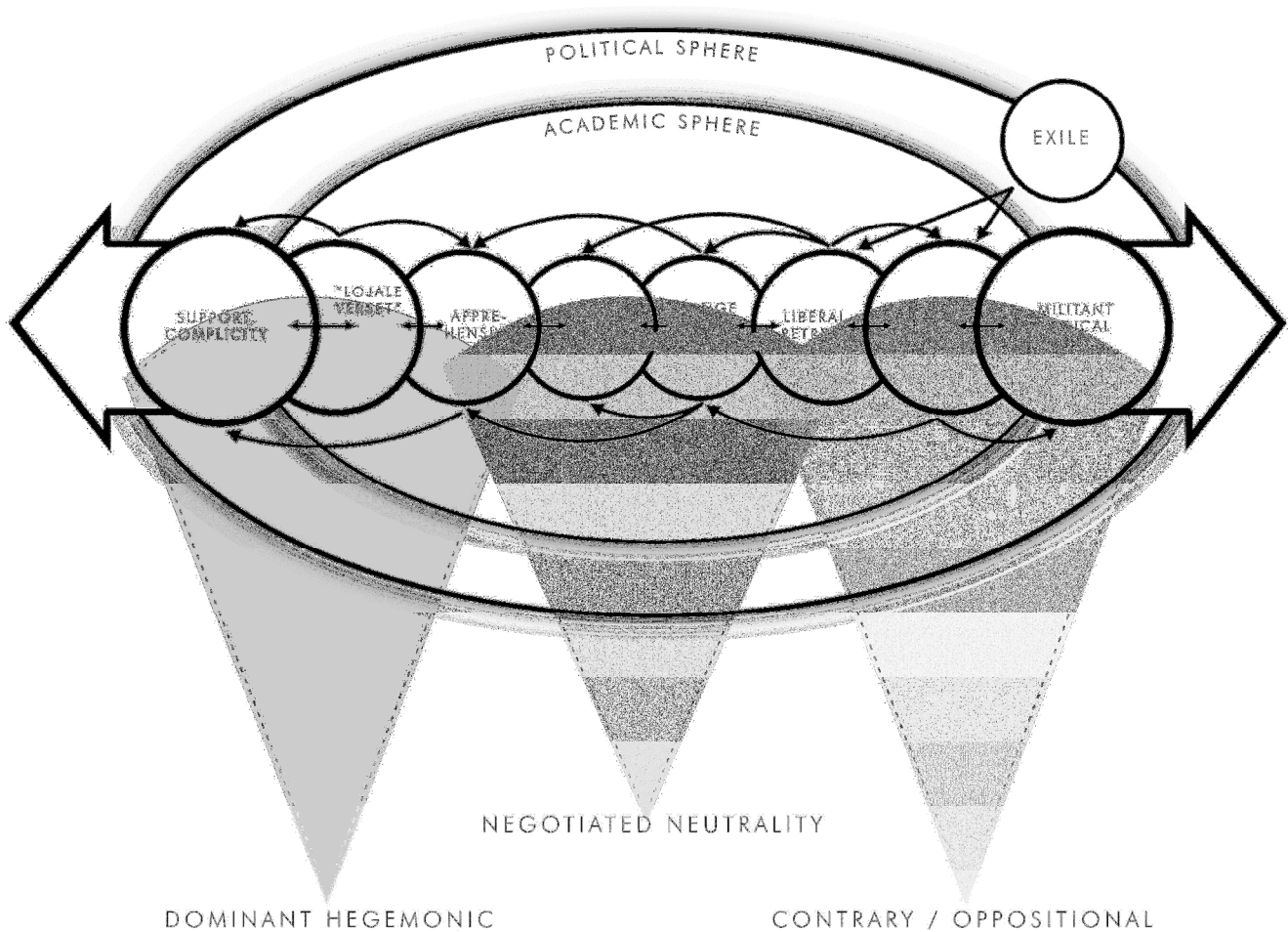
#### **4.4.1 *The international literature***

In the international context, oppositional publishing has also emerged in contexts of state oppression, although the terms used in the literature vary widely: we may be speaking, variously, of alternative, subversive, undermining, anti-establishment, left-wing, radical, interventionist, or progressive publishing, and there may also be an overlap with what is broadly known as independent publishing. For example, Stanley Ridge (2005: 96) describes the African Bookman as a “progressive publisher”, which is a term that is deliberately broad in scope, including liberal, communist and generally non-racial sentiments. In turn, Peter McDonald (2012) uses the phrase “interventionist publishing” to describe such publishers as the African Bookman and Taurus; although he does not define the term, it is clearly intended to be used in the same way as progressive publishing in the example given above. The term I prefer to use is that of David Philip (1991), i.e. “oppositional publishing” – which may be defined, quite simply, as “anti-apartheid and pro-conservation” (1991: 43). More broadly, Wright (2009) defines oppositional publishing as “books that challenge the ways things are”.

This concept of opposition may be further clarified with reference to Stuart Hall's categorisation of the different subject positions available to an audience when receiving a message – for example, when reading a book. Hall (1973) describes three possible positions: the dominant-hegemonic position, the negotiated code or position, and the globally contrary or oppositional code. In other words, the social positioning of a publisher and of a reader would affect how they interpret knowledge and information. If these are situated within the historical and geographical context of scholarly publishing in apartheid South Africa, then the positions could be translated as, first, the pro-Establishment publishers and their work – and readers who accepted such work – in the dominant-hegemonic position; secondly, publishers and readers adopting the negotiated position would be those who largely accepted and complied with legislation, but who had personal reservations and who allowed for exceptions in certain, localised situations; and thirdly, those who opposed the government and the political and legal framework in which it functioned – the oppositional publishers, the anti-apartheid lobby, and their readership, who engaged in a “struggle in discourse” (Hall, 1973: 517). Hall notes, and this is true of the apartheid era and responses as well, that these positions are “shot through with contradictions” (1973: 516). These positions clearly echo the responses depicted in the continuum (see Figure 4.2 for an amplified model).

Notably, oppositional publishers would fall only on the extreme right side of the model, although there is some difference in how radical each publisher can be considered to have been. Renoster Books, for instance, has been described as having “liberal-literary” values, while Ravan and Skotaville were considerably more radical (McDonald, 2009: 282). Thus, while all may be classified as falling within the “oppositional code”, the use of the continuum enables us to begin to clarify differences in approach and ideology within these broad categories. While this is not the main focus of this study, it is an interesting aspect for further research.

Figure 4.2: An amplified continuum of intellectual response in the apartheid context



In other parts of the world, too, a similar oppositional position may be identified, in terms of publishing. For instance, in Spain during the Franco period (1939–1975), publishing was subjected to censorship, surveillance and control. Schweitzer (2008) notes that “publishing houses had three major possibilities for their orientation: a direction remaining ideologically close to the regime, neutrality or opposition” (again, echoing Stuart Hall’s and the continuum’s categories of response). Specifically, “[o]ppositional publishing houses encountered big problems with censorship and were not able to achieve a considerable market position until the mid-1960s. Even then they often had economical problems. Their boom period was short and ended soon after Franco’s death when public interest in political publications declined.” Schweitzer identifies one of the key characteristics of oppositional

publishing as alternative distribution channels, such as the use of direct sales. Oppositional publishing followed a similar route in the much shorter Fascist period in Italy, although Dunnett (2002) notes that the area has not been well studied to date.

In Turkey, alternative or oppositional publishing has also been associated with anti-government and dissident views (Albert, 2008). The model described by Albert, as used in various countries, includes the publication of “books with radical substance and content”, and a non-commercial business structure (e.g. having no owner, or no hierarchy), while distribution may also be non-traditional, primarily through specifically formed book clubs or direct sales, funding is usually non-profit, and very little money is spent on marketing. This model is similar to that used by Ravan Press in South Africa, as will be shown.

Minority and independent publishing in countries such as the UK and USA also reveals some important parallels with oppositional publishing. Philippa Ireland (2012), for instance, in her examination of black British publishers, such as New Beacon Books and Bogle L’Ouverture, describes the primacy of the political mission of such presses, which aimed to promote publishing by, for, and about black people, over the usual commercial mission of publishing. The general problems of independent publishers, such as lack of access to funding and to mainstream distribution channels, are also those of oppositional publishers, as will be seen, although the latter face additional obstacles in the form of political repression. However, looking at the rise of black, minority or independent publishing in other countries, outside the mainstream channels of publishing but nonetheless representing a substantial mass of authors and publishers, leads us to a fundamental question about the history of publishing in South Africa: why has there not been a similar rise of black-owned publishers in South Africa, whether competing with or distancing themselves from mainstream (white-owned) publishing? A consideration of this question falls outside the scope of this study, but it is an important issue for future research.

#### ***4.4.2 South African literature***

The South African literature on what has come to be known as oppositional publishing (such as Cloete, 2000; Essery, 2005; Venter, 2007) tends to locate the first stirrings as far back as



1943 (before the Nationalist government came to power, in 1948), with Julian Rollnick's African Bookman – “the first oppositional publisher in South Africa,” according to Philip (1991: 42), “with a consistent political attitude informing and influencing all his books”. What was ‘oppositional’ about this publisher appears to be its commitment to publishing black South African authors, as well as politically involved authors, including Govan Mbeki, E’skia Mphahlele, Eddie Roux, and Julius Lewin – and the Natal academic, Arthur Keppel-Jones (Ridge, 2005). Rollnick’s “avowed purpose,” according to David Philip (1991: 42), “was to publish ‘literature suitable in language, content and price for African readers’”. This publishing house was short-lived, and its impact has not been studied in sufficient detail, although it produced more than sixty books in around four years.

Strikingly, there appears to have been little oppositional publishing in the 1950s and 1960s, and the reasons for this are unclear from the existing literature. Kantey (1990: xii) has referred more broadly to the 1960s as the “decade of black silence”, and that could form part of the reason. Cloete (2000) notes the rise of Black Consciousness, and suggests a tentative link between the growth of that ideology in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the rise of oppositional publishing. Philip (1991), in turn, has suggested that external publishers fulfilled this role in the 1960s, for instance at Oxford University Press under Leo Marquard. This is another area that merits further study.

More – but still insufficient – attention has been given to the greatest exponents of oppositional publishing in South Africa, who were most active during the most oppressive period of apartheid history, the 1970s and 1980s: David Philip Publishers (founded 1971), Ravan Press (1972), and Skotaville (1982), and to a lesser extent Renoster (1971), BLAC (1973), Ad Donker (1973), Taurus (1975), Buchu Books (1987) and Seriti sa Sechaba (1988), as well as smaller, short-lived publishing programmes. These publishers may be defined as oppositional largely because of their common commitment to publishing works opposing the government. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the majority of the literature on the oppositional publishers is inadequate for scholarly needs; it consists largely of memoirs, interviews, anecdotes and discussions. Essery’s (2005) study of David Philip (which also includes comparisons with Skotaville and Ravan) is an exception. There thus remains considerable scope for study in this area.

The discussion of oppositional publishing that follows reveals the difficulties of applying a conventional book history model, such as that of Darnton (1982) or of Adams and Barker (1993) (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in Chapter 1), to this highly unconventional model of publishing. For a start, neither model makes space for what should go even before the phase of ‘publication’ – the strategy, mission and orientation of the publisher. This may be because neither model places the publisher, as an organisation, at the centre of their model. Rather, in the case of Darnton, the focus falls on all the individuals involved in the production of a book, while Adams and Barker emphasise the book itself as the central figure. This study, in contrast, is an examination of publishers, and while both individuals and books are of importance, they are subsumed within a larger, institutional whole.

Secondly, while both models mention the presence of political, intellectual and social influences in addition to the economic or commercial pressures, it is difficult to know how to foreground these in a case where commercial motivations are of distinctly secondary importance. Under apartheid, every stage of the publishing process was overshadowed by legislation, government control and at least the threat of censorship or punishment for these publishers. Thirdly, Darnton’s model, in particular, envisages a predictable and conventional manufacturing or production process, involving a wide array of actors such as printers, binders, shippers and booksellers. As has been noted above, in the international context, the production and distribution of oppositional publications is considerably more varied and less conventional, and may involve a very small group of people fulfilling almost every role. Lastly, the final phases of readership (or reception and survival, in Adams and Barker’s terms) are again complicated by the intervention of the government, in the case of banned books or authors. Texts would often ‘survive’ in unusual or even illegal forms, such as photocopied pages being circulated, while others failed to reach their intended audience.

This discussion thus follows a slightly different publishing cycle: the publishing mission or philosophy is foregrounded, followed by the business model of the publisher and the very important question of funding. The author profile is then considered, along with questions of gatekeeping. The production phase is not highlighted, because the publishers themselves considered it of much less importance than distribution and the creation of awareness – this

is not to say it does not have any importance, and indeed the paratextual study of oppositional books could be considered a fruitful area for further study. To these publishers, books were simply a medium for their message, rather than a product of importance in itself. Readership and impact are thus also emphasised.

#### ***4.4.3 Mission-driven publishing***

The broader context within which the oppositional publishing model may be located is primarily political – although there were obviously also commercial, social and intellectual influences – and this political context may be characterised as one of oppression, and especially political and legal sanctions against those opposing the regime. The censorship laws, and other legislation aimed at minimising dissent (described in more detail earlier in this chapter), created an atmosphere of repression and forced publishers to rigorously screen manuscripts and authors prior to publication. Non-compliant publishers faced constant scrutiny, the banning of books and subsequent loss of revenue, harassment, and even arrest.

Within this repressive environment, intellectual and cultural influences were often controlled as far as possible – as the regime attempted to mould thoughts and attitudes, and to limit outside viewpoints. In response to this context, the aim and focus of the oppositional publishing houses was not the traditional capitalist aim of making profits, but was rather overtly political and strongly anti-government: “In South Africa, alternative publishers were especially characterised by their strong political focus and their antagonistic, undermining attitude to the apartheid regime and establishment” (Venter, 2007: 95). In fact, an oppositional publisher must be defined in relation to that which it opposes – and in South Africa, this was primarily the State but also, to a lesser degree, the mainstream publishing houses associated with it. Thus, the African Bookman’s “consistent political attitude” informed the publishing philosophy and mission of that publisher. Similarly, Ravan Press explicitly set out with just such a political agenda in mind: “We are part of that section of South African society engaged in changing the present social system ... we aim to produce books that inform the struggle in the present ... and create a climate in which the new society can be discussed” (quoted in Essery, 2005: 31). With their explicit

opposition to censorship, such publishers regularly risked the banning of their works as well as harassment by the security police. Extreme examples are those of Jaki Seroke (Skotaville), who was imprisoned in terms of the Internal Security Act in 1987, and Peter Randall (Ravan), who was banned in 1977. The other oppositional publishers all experienced varying degrees of police harassment, such as surveillance, searches, and stock seizures.

The agenda in the case of David Philip is similarly reflected in their slogan: ‘Books That Matter for Southern Africa’. David and Marie Philip founded their own publishing house in 1971 after OUP’s withdrawal from political publishing, and this was thus seen as an important part of their mission: “Publishers of integrity are, or ought to be, endemically independent, always prepared to give voice to criticism of the establishment, always the supporters of freedom and creativity, holding open the doors for discussion and debate” (Philip, 1991: 41). Moreover, the Philips overtly wanted to focus on politically oppositional and relevant publications, as an interview makes clear: “We had been told that we should stop publishing political books [at OUP], we should concentrate on books for African schools, which was one of the things that we were doing. I just felt it necessary to carry on with publishing political books” (David Philip, quoted in Davis & Ehling, 1994: 133).

The mission in the case of Renoster Books and its successor, Bateleur Books, as well as Ad Donker and Taurus was not only political, but also driven by the imperative of publishing significant local literary voices. Their political motivation arose out of this primary mission, in that the publishers were opposed to the censorship of specific literary works and to the marginalisation of black authors. Renoster was founded by the well-known author Lionel Abrahams, with Eva and Robert Royston, in 1971; Ad Donker founded his own publishing house in 1973; and Taurus was formed in 1975 specifically to publish the work of André P. Brink and later other important literary figures.

Skotaville’s mission was overtly political, too: it was established by Jaki Seroke and Mothobi Mutloatse, who had both previously worked at Ravan Press, specifically to create a space for the “needs, aspirations and objectives of Black writers” to be recognised without being “subject to the criteria, constraints and restrictions” imposed by “commercial publishing houses” – and to be a “voice for the voiceless” (Seroke, 1984: 201). Moreover, the new publishing house was intended to “serve the cultural struggle, in the broader national

liberation struggle in our country” (Ibid.). Skotaville was closely linked with the ethos of Black Consciousness and with the African Writers’ Association – indeed, Ndebele (1989: 416) would comment that the AWA’s “singular achievement has been the establishment of Skotaville”. The very name of Skotaville revealed its political affiliations: it was named after former ANC Secretary-General Mveli Trevor Skota. Moreover, Skotaville’s political mission is reflected in its very structure, as a black-owned small press. This was taken further with the establishment of Seriti sa Sechaba, the first publisher owned by a black woman, after Dinah Lefakane left Skotaville to found a feminist press in 1987.

#### **4.4.4 Business models**

As can be seen, then, an oppositional publisher is situated within a repressive political milieu, and is mission-driven, rather than profit-driven. They seek the freedom to publish works that encourage debate (and, in some cases, to change society itself), rather than focusing on gross margins and the market. This echoes the mission of similar minority-run publishers overseas; for instance, black-owned presses in the Harlem Renaissance have been described as “not interested in making money, but in publishing what needed to be published” (quoted in Young, 2006: 66). This echoes Bourdieu’s sub-division of the field of cultural production into the field of restricted production (dominated by the pursuit of symbolic capital, or the recognition of the symbolic value of its product) and the field of large-scale production (dominated by the quest for economic profit) (Bourdieu, 1985). “Broadly defined [alternative publishing] includes anything outside mainstream commercial publishing, where the market is the final determinant of what is published. In contrast, [in alternative publishing] the publishing mission takes precedence over the business mission” (Cloete, 2000: 43). This implies risk-taking and an interest in long-term interest rather than short-term gain, as further described by Bourdieu:

The entrepreneur whose motive is economic profit puts out cultural products that accommodate an evident demand in order to maximize profits over the short term by means of a fast turnover. The entrepreneur whose aim is cultural prestige rather than fast profit takes risks with his products, since it will only become clear in the longer term whether they are to become highly rated (and sold) as cultural objects. (Bourdieu’s theory, described by De Glas, 1998: 380)

The additional motivation of the oppositional publishers, however, was neither profit nor prestige, but activism for the purpose of political change – a significant difference in publishing strategy. And, because the political mission takes precedence, funding – often external donor funding – is key: “Most oppositional publishers have been largely funded from abroad and usually classify themselves as non-profitmaking” (Philip, 1991: 45). To a large extent, such donor funding fell away with the end of apartheid, and the oppositional publishers did not survive, apart from David Philip which followed a more market-driven or commercial model. The African Bookman, too, foundered because “[t]he venture as a whole has failed to pay its way” (Rollnick, 1945, quoted in Ridge, 2005: 102).

The mission-driven nature of this form of publishing led to the use of specific kinds of business models. These can largely be classified as two kinds: mainly non-profit and non-traditional, on the one hand, and mainly commercially oriented and professional, on the other. The first kind may be illustrated by several oppositional publishers. For example, Ravan Press was determinedly non-profit – Randall (1997: 2) describes the “intense idealism” that ensured that “the profit motive did not feature at all” – and had a non-traditional company structure, making decisions through debate and consensus rather than implementing a clear strategy. As Grundlingh (1997: 28) notes, “[a]s an outsider one gained the impression that the operation was being run without a visible formal hierarchical order; no sumptuous offices for directors and often decisions were taken while sitting on a wooden bench in the backyard”. The Press became dependent on external funding over time, although it began without such aid. After Randall’s banning in 1977, Ravan was managed by Mike Kirkwood and then by Glenn Moss (from 1991). Despite their efforts, in the 1990s, “closure was a more viable option than rescue, given the financial implications” (Moss, 1997: 14). Moss (1997: 14; emphasis in the original) highlights the link between the company’s mission and business model thus:

... its weaknesses as a publishing *company* were the direct result of its strengths as a socially-engaged and committed *publisher*, and its internal systems in all the basics of publishing – warehousing, marketing, financial management, planning, sales representation – were so flawed as to defy restructuring.

Skotaville, in turn, was structured as an “indigenous collective initiative” (Mutloatse, 1992: 212), which is similar to Ravan’s structure under Kirkwood, although legally speaking it was a non-profit limited company. While originally the intention was to remain independent, to the extent of not depending on any outside source for funding, Skotaville largely survived through external donor funding, from sources such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and the South African Council of Churches. Initial hopes that the Press would become self-sustaining were not fulfilled, and by 1992 Mutloatse was appealing for aid: “We urgently need this specialized assistance to help us relaunch Skotaville on a firmer business footing, so that we can weather the storm of transition from the apartheid era to a non-racial, united and democratic South Africa” (quoted in Essery, 2005: 39). Seriti sa Sechaba was also heavily dependent on external funding, notably from USAID.

Taurus started out as a partnership, and later became a company, more for legal than financial reasons. In this partnership, none of the profits of the company were paid out to the directors – all revenue was redirected back into the company, to subsidise bannings and future projects (Coetzee, 1984). It should be noted, though, that as university lecturers the directors of Taurus all had ‘day jobs’ and they did not have to live off the proceeds of their publishing. Moreover, in terms of production, Taurus relied almost entirely on in-house typesetting, refusing to work with what they perceived as “over zealous and ‘moralistic’” typesetters (Coetzee, 1984: 32). Once again, the non-commercial outlook was not viable over the longer term.

The second kind of business model may be seen in the operations of David Philip and Ad Donker, for instance. David Philip had a much more professional, mainstream publishing structure, perhaps as a result of the Philips’ experience in publishing. They started with their own start-up capital, and used a variety of income streams to maintain cash flow, including the sale of subsidiary rights, the use of author funding to reduce risk, and an international network of distributors to reach a wider market. Moreover, because they were such a small operation, a great deal of the publishing value chain was conducted in-house. For instance, for the literary magazine *Contrast*, Marie Philip noted, “We typeset and laid it out and distributed it” (Davis & Ehling, 1994: 134). The scope of the publishing operation is made clear: “There are twenty-one of us and we do the whole operation from editing, design,

production, invoicing, accounting, warehousing, promoting sales, and foreign rights. We publish 20 titles a year” (David Philip, in Davis & Ehling, 1994: 139). Their understanding of the value chain, and especially their success in inserting their publications into the more mainstream channels of distribution and marketing, led them to have a widespread impact over more than three decades, and to become perhaps the most visible and viable of the oppositional publishers.

Perhaps as a result of their largely unorthodox business models or their inability to reach a sustainable market, as well as the drying-up of funding after the end of the anti-apartheid struggle, few oppositional publishers survived into the twenty-first century. Ravan would be bought up by Hodder & Stoughton Educational South Africa in 1994, having survived just long enough to see the new South Africa come into being. The acquisition was intended to be a move to save the company financially, but it resulted in the imprint falling away altogether. Through later mergers and acquisitions, Ravan’s backlist is now part of the mainstream trade publisher Pan Macmillan’s list. Similarly, Taurus ceased publishing in the early 1990s, and its stock was bought by Human & Rousseau, also a mainstream publisher in South Africa, and now owned by Nasionale Pers / Media 24.

But even the more commercially successful publishers have not continued publishing in the same form. David Philip has survived only as an imprint of New Africa Books, after the Philips retired in late 1999 and sold a share to that (black-owned) organisation. Ad Donker was bought out by Jonathan Ball, another independent. Skotaville lives on, in theory, as part of a much reorganised media firm run by Mutloatse, the Mutloatse Art Heritage Trust. None of these is still an active, productive imprint. The full range of factors leading to the demise or decline of these publishers deserves further scholarly attention.

#### ***4.4.5 Authors and list-building***

Once again, Pierre Bourdieu’s division of publishers is useful in categorising the oppositional publishers in South Africa. He makes a distinction between those publishers that are willing to take a risk with new authors, for long-term gain, and those that prefer to publish established, best-seller authors, for mass consumption and short-term gain (Bourdieu,



1985). The oppositional publishers were certainly on the side of long-term gain, even if in their case it was political change and social relevance, rather than literary merit or commercial gain *per se*. They thus followed a relatively eclectic publishing strategy, publishing both fiction and non-fiction. The latter, non-fiction category often consisted of titles with a scholarly bias that would otherwise have been published by a university press or scholarly publisher: history, politics, sociology, and so on. For instance, Skotaville's list focused largely on politics, theology and education, with about 20% dedicated to fiction.

Moreover, the oppositional publishers were deliberately provocative, in that their aim was to publish critical voices, progressive ideas and books that gave ordinary people a sense of their power. They thus published many young, untried authors and used various experimental formats, such as what came to be known as protest literature or the 'proemdra' (a combination of prose, poetry and drama). These formats are seldom associated with more mainstream publishers, perhaps in part because some of these ventures were subsidised or partly donor-funded: "The alternative publishers could afford the financial risk of dabbling in odd ventures and as a result discover new authors – Ravan Press published J.M. Coetzee's first novel *Dusklands* – because they had foreign funding in support of the cause of anti-apartheid" (Greyling, 2003: 56). Randall (quoted in De Waal, 1996) comments on the decision to publish this "unknown author": "My sober judgement was that this unsolicited manuscript by an unknown author, which had been rejected everywhere else, was the work of a writer of genius". He gambled on a large print run of 4 500 copies, and the work was both a commercial and critical success. Thereafter, Coetzee was able to interest an international publisher, Secker & Warburg, in his work. As Wittenberg (2008: 135) notes, one of the reasons for Coetzee seeking an overseas publisher was that he was concerned about the possible reception of his second novel, *In the Heart of the Country*: "if published in South Africa, might conceivably be banned on one or both of the following grounds that (1) it impairs good race relations, (2) it is obscene etc". Coetzee directly addressed Ravan's stance on censorship and self-censorship in South Africa:

Assuming that Ravan were interested in publishing the book, and assuming that I had no objections, would you be prepared to submit the MS to the Publications Control Board for scrutiny? And if they asked for cuts, what would you do? If you were not prepared, on principle, to submit any MS to the PCB, would you be

prepared to publish a book which, although in your opinion of literary merit, stood a good chance of having official action taken against it? (Coetzee, 1975, quoted in Wittenberg, 2008: 135)

In the event, the answers to these questions were moot, as Coetzee went ahead with international publication, and the book itself was found “not undesirable” by the critics. Ravan was, after much negotiation, allowed to publish a small local edition some time after the original UK edition.

Similarly, Renoster took the risk of publishing black authors and poets who were then almost entirely unknown, such as Oswald Mtshali (*Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*, 1971) and Wally Serote (*Yakal'inkomo*, 1972). Donker (1983: 32) notes of the former that, “[b]efore the year [1971] ended five printings had been made; a year after publication some 16 000 copies were in print, making it South Africa’s poetry best seller.” But the imprint was not able to attract further authors, and collapsed within a year.

In regard to the authors published by such oppositional publishers, we must also consider the selection or gatekeeping practices associated with such publishers. In a number of cases, this was linked to the perceived relevance of the works, and not their potential commercial value. For example, the small oppositional publisher Taurus was formed precisely to publish an important literary work, rather than for monetary gain (Coetzee, 1984). Andre P. Brink’s novel, *Kennis van die Aand* (‘Looking on Darkness’), had been banned in 1973 – the first significant Afrikaans work to be banned by the Publications Control Board – and his next manuscript, *’n Oomblik in die Wind* (‘An Instant in the Wind’) – a novel about a relationship across the colour bar – was rejected by the mainstream Afrikaner publisher Human & Rousseau in 1975 (Venter, 2007: 106). Three lecturers at Wits – Ampie Coetzee, Ernie Lindenberg and John Miles (with the later addition of Gerrit Olivier in 1983) – decided to form a publishing house and publish Brink’s new book. They printed only 1 000 copies, in great secrecy, and sold out the entire print run within two weeks. Ironically, the novel was not banned after all. In a further irony, Human & Rousseau would later buy up the Taurus backlist, in 1992, and issue their own edition of the novel in 1994.

At Taurus, the selection policies were part of their *raison d'être*. Coetzee (1984: 32) notes that “[w]riters whose manuscripts were refused by the large publishing houses because of the Publishing Laws, or who were advised to censor parts of their manuscripts, or who were starting to oppose the establishment publishers as they made no stand against censorship, came to Taurus”. The small publisher produced more than eighty titles, including two of Nadine Gordimer’s novels (in association with Jonathan Cape), as well as books by Breyten Breytenbach, John Miles and Dan Roodt. Several of their titles were banned, such as *Stanley Bekker en die Boikot* (‘Stanley Bekker and the Boycott’) and *Donderdag of Woensdag* (‘Thursday or Wednesday’) both by John Miles and *Sonneskyn* (‘Sunshine’) by Dan Roodt (see Coetzee, 1984). Venter (2007: 112) points out that Taurus also published non-fiction, focusing on political and social issues.

Skotaville quickly became associated with an influential stable of authors as well. Their immediate significance was signalled by the publication of Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s first book, *Hope and Suffering* (1982), which Mutloatse edited himself, and for which he also wrote the foreword. Tutu’s work sold exceptionally well, both in South Africa and abroad, being translated into languages as diverse as Dutch, Spanish, Norwegian, Swedish, German and Japanese. In fact, Mutloatse was to boast that “the German version alone sold over 80 000 copies, an unheard-of feat for a non-German and African cleric” (quoted in Makoe, 2011). Other authors also became household names: Neville Alexander, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane, Phillip Kgosana, Bob Leshoai, Chabani Manganyi, Don Mattera, Fatima Meer, Itumeleng Mosala, Buti Tlhagale, Siphon Sepamla, Tim Couzens, Motsoko Phoko, Jonathan Jansen, and Bishop Mvume Dandala, among others.

Ad Donker’s publishing decisions were somewhat more commercially oriented, but because he published some significant oppositional authors, his publishing house, too, came to be seen as subversive. Donker would add to his list Wally Serote, Siphon Sepamla and other New Black Poets, as well as the playwright Athol Fugard, for instance, with his drama, *Tsotsi*. He also saw the merit in republishing local literary classics, such as Bessie Head, Olive Schreiner, Sol Plaatje, and Bloke Modisane. Donker continued with his publishing programme despite government threats to withdraw his residency permit (he was a Dutch national), security police surveillance, and illegal searches of his house.

Given the high calibre of many of the authors published, then, it may be noted that oppositional publishers not only served a marginalised group of authors, but also a mainstream group of authors whose *ideas* were marginalised because they contradicted government policies. Moreover, in addition to experimental formats and fiction, several oppositional publishers also made a name for themselves publishing non-fiction, in particular history and political commentary. While some of the titles were popular in orientation, others were more academic. This brought them into direct competition with the university presses.

A further note on the relationship between authors and publishers also needs to be made, given the racially divided societal context of oppositional and other forms of publishing. This is to point out that the vast majority of publishers were – and still remain – white-owned and managed, while a number of the most important authors published were black. John K. Young (2006) has theorised about the significance of this relationship in the American context, in his book, *Black Writers, White Publishers*. He notes that, “what sets the white publisher-black author relationship apart is the underlying social structure that transforms the usual unequal relationship into an extension of a much deeper cultural dynamic” (2006: 4), and goes on to analyse “the ways in which a concentration of money and cultural authority in mainstream publishers works to produce images of blackness that perpetuate an implicit black-white divide between authors and readers, with publishers acting as a gateway in this interaction” (Ibid.: 6). Young’s work illustrates the extent to which black authors have negotiated white power structures in order to reach their audience, through a complex act of confrontation, collaboration and even compromise. While much of what Young describes applies equally well to the South African situation as to the American, there are certain important differences. For instance, the missions of the oppositional publishers aimed not to perpetuate divides among racial groups, but to overcome them – indeed to overthrow a racially oppressive government in so doing. Moreover, Young’s description relies largely on a white-dominated publishing industry representing “blackness” to an implicitly white audience, but this was not the case to the same extent with the oppositional publishers, who deliberately targeted a multiracial audience (see the next section for more on distribution and marketing efforts, and the following section of readership).

What is interesting to note is that this situation, of black writers and white publishers, has persisted in this country. While black writers and leaders in South Africa have called for more black-owned publishing houses, these have on the whole either failed to materialise or not survived. This is a matter that requires further research, to ascertain the reasons for their failure and to consider whether there is still a need for racially distinct publishing houses that could enable black authors to reach out to their readers without the mediation of white publishers.

#### ***4.4.6 Distribution and marketing***

Related to their occasional use of unorthodox financing models, as described above, oppositional publishers sometimes resorted to alternative distribution channels, at times to circumvent censorship. Censorship in South Africa was applied as a post-publication measure, which implies that “books were banned after they were already in the marketplace” (Matteau, 2007: 83). This intervention thus directly affected publishers at the stage of distribution and bookselling, and this is precisely the stage of the publishing value chain where they were weak. For instance, it has been argued that the African Bookman collapsed because “it could not resolve the problems of promotion and distribution” and thus could not reach “its potentially considerable market” (Philip, 1991: 42). The publisher seemed to rely on informal methods of distributing its publications, such as through agents., as Rollnick experienced various difficulties in “the physical channels of distribution and advertisement”. He elaborates:

... no bookshops cater for this trade; mail-order despatch implies too great an effort on the part of the reader; newspaper space for advertising is crippling in cost; trading stores are not keen on stocking the literature; agents sell too little to merit the high organisational expenses involved. (quoted in Ridge, 2005: 100)

In an attempt to circumvent such difficulties from the mainstream distribution channels as well as censorship, direct sales was a tactic used from time to time, but the market was not so underground or unusual as to warrant this on the whole. Ravan, for instance, used unorthodox distribution methods. In an interview in 1980, Mike Kirkwood of Ravan noted that, “[t]he whole black readership in this country operates largely outside the normal

channels of bookshops. ... So we use non-commercial outlets, outlets that derive from the writers' groups that we publish. Before the first issue of the magazine [*Staffrider*] was published, we had lined up a whole army of distributors who knew what the magazine was doing and that their particular communities would be interested in it" (Kirkwood, 1980: 25–26). This form of direct engagement with the readership predates the kind of communities now being developed with the help of social media.

David Philip (1990: 14) has described a failed experiment of his own in direct sales; he continued to use more mainstream distribution methods as a result:

In 1987 we published *Detention and Torture in South Africa* by Don Foster and Dennis Davis, a powerful indictment of our security police. So sure were we that it would be banned, and so important did we consider the book and its widest possible distribution, that we decided on drastic action. We made a list of 600 sympathetic persons whom we regarded as likely purchasers and, before the book appeared in the shops, dispatched 600 copies to them, with a letter explaining that we wished to ensure a wide distribution for what we regarded as an important book and that we enclosed our invoice in the hope that they would be prepared to pay for the book, but that if not they could either return it or keep it without obligation. However, our optimistic expectations were not fulfilled. We lost over R2 000 and received angry letters from some of our friends, who objected to being expected, however gently, to pay for goods delivered but not ordered. And the book was never banned anyway. A marketing experiment that failed!

Thus, unorthodox distribution methods were often ineffective in actually reaching their intended audience.

Taurus went as far as using *samizdat* methods of developing mailing lists and distributing their publications directly to a group of 'subscribers' (Coetzee, 1984: 32). Their business practices thus fell outside of the usual distribution channels. However, the local oppositional publishers should not be seen as a South African version of *samizdat*. *Samizdat*, as it emerged in communist countries such as the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia refers rather to an underground mode of often self-published material – and indeed, the word *samizdat* may be translated as 'self-published' (cf. Johnston, 1999). In the South African context, this is more similar to the pamphlets printed and passed around by underground political groups, such as the African National Congress in exile, than to the formation of publishing houses which operated in a commercial environment. The similarity emerges in the attempt

to bypass censorship laws, but application of this model of publishing is clearly not sustainable if one is talking about the activities of David Philip or Ravan Press. A common factor of South African oppositional publishing, at least in regard to the publication of books, is that it was more mainstream than *samizdat* publishing. In fact, the success of the oppositional publishers in reaching a wider audience and creating publicity for their authors usually relied on their insertion into more mainstream channels of distribution and bookselling.

#### **4.4.7 Readership and impact**

The readership for oppositional publishers is often as politically defined as the publishers themselves. Usually, both in the international context and in South Africa, the majority of readers are located to the left of the political spectrum. In South Africa, the readership targeted was both local and international, but was largely focused on those who supported the struggle against apartheid. Some of their publications were undoubtedly not meant for elite consumption, as they were being produced for a wider audience – politically defined rather than demographically or by class. Skotaville, for instance, was clearly aimed at a mass and multiracial market (Cloete, 2000: 51). As noted in the interview with Kirkwood quoted above (1980), at Ravan too there was a significant focus on reaching both a black and a white readership; he estimated the readership of *Staffrider* as being 90% black. Oliphant (1991: 69), however, cautions against seeing a black, “mass” audience as necessarily large: “For oppositional publishers concerned with reaching the oppressed, this market has since the penetration of literacy on this sub-continent, been relatively small”. Nonetheless, the existence of a multiracial audience was a significant factor for the oppositional publishers.

Apart from the local market, there was also a readership overseas. Kirkwood described Ravan’s international readership as important, but not substantial – “I wouldn’t think it’s more than 500 copies” (Kirkwood, 1980: 26). In contrast, the Philips always saw their international market as being of great significance, with Marie Philip commenting that the publishing house “did not intend to limit [itself] to the small reading market of Southern Africa” (quoted in Essery, 2005: 20). This is borne out by the attention paid by David Philip to developing co-publishing and licensing links with other publishers – notably James Currey

and Rex Collings – and to attending the Frankfurt Book Fair. However, over time the international market dwindled, partly due to declining interest in South African issues once apartheid had come to an end.

Even books that were banned had a readership. Rachel Matteau (2007) has conducted an interesting study of the circulation of banned books in the apartheid era, as has Andrew van der Vlies (2007). Matteau (2007: 85) notes that the unintended consequence of censorship, for instance, could be the creation of publicity, with the Government Gazette’s listing of banned books served as a form of ‘catalogue’ for certain groups of readers. She also goes on to describe how the readership for banned and oppositional books formed reading communities. Further examination of the distribution and readership of banned books is merited.

The lasting impact of the oppositional publishers is difficult to measure, but it has been argued that they helped to shape attitudes to change and encouraged political and social debate. Randall (1997: 31), for instance, argues that “Ravan publications did much to rephrase the debate about the South African past and to bring into focus earlier struggles against oppression”. Moreover, these publishers “played an important role in building the awareness, ideas and committed action that put an end to apartheid” (Cloete, 2000: 43; see also Essery, 2005: 8). As a result, Lionel Abrahams, for instance, describes Ravan as having had a “unique and tremendously significant history” (quoted in Morphet, 1996).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

To provide a broader context for a study of the university presses, this chapter examines restrictions on freedom to publish, such as censorship and infringements on academic freedom. The varying debates around the importance of protecting academic freedom, playing a public or engaged role as an academic, or maintaining scientific objectivity and neutrality, are described. It is from precisely the perspective that academics should play a political or public role, that the universities have been criticised for their wavering stance on academic freedom and on apartheid.



The different intellectual positions taken by various academic institutions and their faculty, in response to the growing repression of the apartheid state, are then described. These positions are plotted on a continuum of response based on the work of political sociologists Heribert Adam, Pierre Hugo and Mark Sanders – from protest (what Adam terms political reform and the militant-radical stance), through compromise and complicity (change through association and liberal retreat), to a lack of engagement (privatism and exile), to open support for the government and its policies. The response of self-censorship (similar to, but distinct from, privatism) is examined in particular, because this is a strategy associated with publishers as well as academics. The particular example of Oxford University Press, and its growing distance from political involvement after a self-censorship debacle, is described.

This chapter has also served to highlight the development of a methodological model for this study. From the literature, a conceptualisation of a continuum of intellectual responses from academics proved useful and relevant. But there are shortcomings to this framework in that it does not cover the responses of academics who did not dissent, i.e. those who supported the apartheid government, either tacitly or openly. The model is then amplified, through application to the oppositional publishers. Attention was thus paid to the response of publishers to the growing restraints of the apartheid government, and in particular the growth of oppositional publishing. The discussion throws up both parallels with, and differences from, international examples of oppositional or independent publishing, and could thus be used, for instance, for further comparative work. It should be noted that the continuum also allows for shifts in philosophy or intellectual response over time to be considered.

At this point, however, the continuum has only been conceptualised in terms of the literature, and has not been empirically tested. In the following chapter, I test the continuum against evidence: the knowledge production or output of the university presses, as a proxy for measuring their responses to resistance or dissent – to the mission of oppositional publishing, in fact. Because Adam's model, in particular, is applicable to academics and their output, it is singularly well suited to a study of knowledge production and to the products of research. This will be the first time, however, that it has been applied

in the context of publishing and to the concrete output of a publishing list. The lack of analyses of publishing lists or South African book history studies is a clear shortcoming in the literature examined thus far.

Clearly, there is a perception that the university presses may also be perceived as oppositional publishers, but there is also some doubt concerning the attribution of the label of oppositional publishing to the university presses. Chapter 5 of this thesis will focus specifically on this question, with an eye to whether an examination of the historical record, and the concrete publishing lists of the university presses themselves, can provide a fuller answer.