

Balancing cultural, literary and financial capital in trade publishing: a case study of Tafelberg Publishers, South Africa

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Abstract

This article is an historical analysis of the changing editorial strategy of Tafelberg, a South African publisher. It aims to shed light on the culture-commerce divide in South African publishing, the changing cultural and social impact of a publisher specialising in a minority language, and the nexus of editorial philosophies, language and nationalism. The research considers Bourdieu's (1993) conceptualisation of the fields of culture with their associated levels of symbolic, financial and cultural capital, and the notion of poles of restricted and mass production of textual products in its analysis. It was found that Tafelberg has had significant cultural impact in South Africa, particularly with its involvement in the growth of Afrikaans literature and nationalism. Tafelberg is now an imprint of one of South Africa's publishing giants, and they remain an important publisher of Afrikaans titles, even though their social and symbolic impact has changed.

Keywords

Tafelberg

Nasionale Pers / Naspers

NB Publishers

Afrikaans publishing

Culture vs. commerce

Introduction

The publishing industry is often characterised as balancing the competing interests of commerce and culture, of mass markets and elites, of freedom of speech and ideologies, and of national and global forces. A publisher's focus will always include both cultural and profit-driven goals, so there is an ongoing tension between social influences and commercial imperatives. Considering that publishers are businesses, they also have to regularly change and adapt strategies to grow and maintain profitability, which in turn shapes and sometimes limits their social, literary or cultural impact. Global trends such as the increasing commodification of cultural products and consolidation through mergers and acquisitions are also reflected in national or regional publishing industries.

These tensions have often been placed in the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's¹ conceptualisation of the fields of culture, with their associated levels of symbolic, financial and cultural capital, and the notion of poles of restricted and mass production of textual products. Bourdieu posits a tension between commercial capital and symbolic capital, where 'symbolic' can be used to refer to literary prestige, to cultural status, or in some cases to political or national imperatives. The concepts of nationhood and nationalism are significant in relation to print culture, as suggested by Anderson's² theory of imagined communities. Anderson depicts a nation as a socially-constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves

¹ P. Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Columbia University Press 1993).

² B. R. O'G. Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed., 2nd ed (London; Verso 1991).

as part of a group, even if they do not know all the individuals of the community. He frames the emergence of nationalism as a product of specific historical circumstances, closely related to the development of printing technology and the spread of ideas through print. Thus, despite their physical separation, members of a nation often regard themselves as sharing in a fraternity with which they identify.³ Nationalism is closely linked to publishing, with many countries actively seeking to develop their national identity through the construction of ‘national literatures’ or a ‘national heritage’ of written works.⁴

In South Africa, these theoretical aspects of commercial and symbolic capital, and the importance of both literary prestige and national identity, have not been explored in great detail in relation to the publishing industry. However, publishing was an important part of the strategy used to develop Afrikaans as a language and Afrikaners as a community. While studies have been done on mission presses and printing and colonial publishing, “...the vast majority of scholarly attention to publishing remains focused on the present and the future”.⁵ Thus, studies focused on publisher histories are limited, and there is even less information relating to their strategies. While literary works and their authors have received attention, publishing strategy has not yet been subjected to sustained scholarly enquiry: “...little attention has been paid to the material forms of books and other texts, their distribution channels, publicity and marketing, pricing, readership, and impact (except from a literary point of view)”⁶. Through an historical analysis of the changing editorial strategy of Tafelberg, a South African publisher, this article aims to shed light on the culture-commerce divide in South African publishing, the changing cultural and social impact of a publisher specialising in a minority language, and the nexus of editorial philosophies, language and nationalism. This article aims to trace and analyse the development of publishing strategies at Tafelberg from the 1950s to the present day, and to probe what factors affected this evolution.

³ N. Mambrol, ‘Benedict Anderson’s Concept of Imagined Community’, in: *Literary Theory and Criticism*, January 9 (2019).

⁴ E. le Roux as quoted in A. Phillips and M. Bhaskar (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press 2019), p. 90.

⁵ E. Le Roux, ‘Book history in the African world: The state of the discipline’, in: *Book History*. 15:1 (2012), pp. 256 & 258.

⁶ Le Roux, art. cit. (n. 5), p. 250.

The South African print culture context

Print culture has been deliberately deployed for both cultural and political purposes in South Africa, apart from the more usual aim of profit. Wafawarowa explains that “...publishing industry members, readers, authors, critical observers, policy makers and government officials...have played and continued to play a central role in South Africa’s history and development” and he confirms the “importance of publishing as part of a national development process”.⁷ This is particularly significant given South Africa’s diversity, with various cultural identities and a variety of audiences. For example, South Africa has eleven official languages, though the industry only publishes effectively in two of those languages. In the general leisure reading or trade sector, Afrikaans and English are the dominant published languages; while English books have to compete with imports, Afrikaans books do not and thus more new local titles are published in Afrikaans than in English.⁸

Previous studies in this regard have limited relevance to these broader national and cultural questions. In general, there are few histories or profiles of publishers in South Africa, including Maskew Miller, Van Schaik, A.A. Balkema, and HAUM.⁹ Mostly, there is a lack of research – especially historic research and the preservation of archives – of many publishers who were active during the apartheid period, of which some are still active today. Moreover, the sources that examine the bigger picture of South African publishing mostly do so superficially as a starting point for another study, usually of literature. There are various books and articles discussing the history of Afrikaans literature¹⁰ that provide context for the research. However, none of these focus on publishing strategies and some do not include popular fiction in their studies at all, focusing on literary titles and not on the full range a trade publisher may cover. For example, Van Coller and Brink’s books (among many others) focus on historical literature based on specific authors, in particular those whose works are considered ‘high literature’ or having high symbolic capital. In other words, as opposed to giving a broad overview of the South African publishing history, the studies examine influential (literary)

⁷ B. Wafawarowa as quoted in N. Evans and M. Seeber, *The politics of publishing in South Africa* (Holger Ehling Publishing, London 2000), p. 1).

⁸ J. Moller, *Multilingual Publishing: An Investigation into Access to Trade Books through the Eleven Official Languages in South Africa* (University of Pretoria, 2015), 86, <http://hdl.handle.net/2263/45945>.

⁹ E. le Roux, ‘The accidental growth of book history: a literature review of print culture and book history studies in South Africa’, in: *Mousaion*, 30: 1 (2012), p. 48.

¹⁰ See H.P. Van Coller’s *Perspektief en Profiel* (1998 and 1999), J.C. Kannemeyer’s *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur* (1988 and 2005), T. T. Cloete’s *Die Afrikaanse literatuur sedert sestig* (1980), A. P. Brink’s *Voorlopige rapport: beskouings oor die Afrikaanse literatuur van Sewentig* (1976 and 1980) and J.C. Steyn’s *Ons gaan ’n taal maak: Afrikaans sedert die Patriot-jare* (2014).

authors and their works specifically, which makes determining an overall picture of the publishing industry difficult. A similar issue arises with English-language and African-language literary histories: for example, *The Cambridge companion of South African Literature* (2012), which investigates specific areas like women's writing, and the collection *Rethinking South African literary history* (1996), that has a focus on African language literature and politics. In addition, most literary studies do not consider the wider publishing context. Considering the South African publishing industry from a "literary point of view demands attentiveness to matters other than purely literary. It calls for a perspective which links literature to economic, institutional and technological factors involved in publication", according to Oliphant. In addition, Oliphant suggests South African literature is marked by a "colonial history as well as by some obvious deficiencies arising from prolonged imprisonment by politics".¹¹ Kleyn investigates Afrikaans literature in her doctoral thesis (2013) by researching the role players in the Afrikaans literary system that give rise to canonisation. She concludes that not enough attention has been given to certain parts of the study of Afrikaans literature; for example reading preferences, reviewing practices, changes in the book market and the lack of training for authors.¹²

This research is based on a combination of archival and bibliographic analysis through the National Afrikaans Literary Museum (NALN) and the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), as well as interviews. The publisher's list (received from NALN) was analysed to determine changes in decisions-to-publish, and archival material included the analysis of early marketing material and in-house communications.

Afrikaner Nationalism and Nasionale Pers

The development of Afrikaner identity and the idea of building an Afrikaner nation, which would later be closely linked to the apartheid ideology of separate – and elite – development, is closely linked to the development of a literate nation and community. The links between culture, politics, nationalism and publishing in the South African context can be illustrated through the origins of Nasionale Pers – the media entity that would later acquire Tafelberg as

¹¹ Evans and Seeber, op. cit (n. 7), pp. 107-108.

¹² L. Kleyn, *'n Sisteemteoretiese kartering van die Afrikaanse literatuur vir die tydperk 2000-2009: kanoniserings in die Afrikaanse literatuur* (University of Pretoria 2013), p. 229.

an imprint. The founding of Nasionale Pers (the ‘National Press’) was not initially a commercial venture, but based on cultural and political considerations. Sources agree that the founders considered it their duty to develop Afrikaans as a language of education, science and literature, and to have it recognised as an official language (eventually realised in 1925).¹³

Nasionale Pers was founded in 1914, just a year after the founding of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party.¹⁴ It was only 12 years since the end of the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), today usually referred to as the South African War, and mutual contempt between English-speakers and Afrikaners was widespread.¹⁵ Afrikaans had a lower status than English; as a written language it ‘barely existed’, literacy levels were low and there was ‘no reading culture among the Afrikaners’.¹⁶ Supporters of the language intentionally set out to change this situation by developing Afrikaans print culture, to develop it into ‘a supple new medium of nationalist self-expression’.¹⁷ While the reading public was still very small, Afrikaans had a double role to play: on a material and commercial level it was used to sell products such as newspapers, and on a political and cultural level, it provided Afrikaners with a unifying identity – an ‘imagined community’.¹⁸ Thus, in spite of various races speaking Afrikaans, the earliest editorial goals set out by the Pers were very specifically focused on reaching (and, as per Anderson, to some extent crafting) a white, Christian (literate) community of Afrikaners and their interests, to deliberately ‘further develop the *volk*’.¹⁹ This mission was born out of the close relationship between the Pers and the National Party, the political expression of Afrikaner nationalism.²⁰ Botma²¹ agrees that Nasionale Pers was founded to support Afrikaner

¹³ C. F. J. Muller, *Sonop in die Suid: geboorte en groei van die Nasionale Pers 1915-1948* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel 1990), p. 88.

¹⁴The National Party was founded in order to rally Afrikaners against the ‘Anglicizing policies’ of the government of Louis Botha and Jan Christian Smuts. Politically and socially conservative, it would later be the party closely associated with separate development or apartheid. See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Party-political-party-South-Africa>.

¹⁵ L. Rabe (ed.), *’n Konstante revolusie: Naspers, Media24 en oorgange* (Kaapstad, Suid-Afrika: Tafelberg 2015), p. 27; Muller, op. cit. (n. 13), p. 80; Terreblanche as quoted in Rabe, p. 17).

¹⁶ L. Scholtz as quoted in Rabe, op. cit. (n. 15), p. 27.

¹⁷ E. Boehmer as quoted in D. Attwell and D. Attridge. *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press 2012), p. 257.

¹⁸ H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners: ’n Biografie* (Kaapstad: Tafelberg 2005), p. 316.

¹⁹ In this context, the “volk” refers to the white Afrikaans-speaking community. In addition, Afrikaner nationalism underpinned the establishment of white Afrikaner political and cultural control during the apartheid years, and the *volk* was associated with nationalist, Christian Afrikaners (Klingenberg in S.G. Kellman and N. Lvovich, (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge 2021), p. 254.

²⁰ Scholtz as quoted in Rabe op. cit. (n. 15), p. 27.; Mpe & Seeber as quoted in N. Evans and M. Seeber, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 19.

²¹ G. Botma, “Manufacturing Cultural Capital : Arts Journalism at Die Burger (1990-1999)” (Thesis, Stellenbosch : Stellenbosch University 2011), p. 118.

nationalism and steadfastly promoted a nationalist discourse; it later even employed several Prime Ministers and politicians as editors. This support for Afrikaner nationalism would reach its full fruition once the National Party came to power in 1948, and ushered in the policies of separate development now known as apartheid.

Similarly, Tafelberg's mission would be closely intertwined with the project of promoting the Afrikaans language and culture. Unpublished archival documents note that 'the history of Tafelberg-Uitgewery is also the history of Afrikaans literature because, through the years, the company published all the leading authors in Afrikaans'.²² Furthermore, the documents make telling comments about their mission: '... a good publisher brings the *volk* and the authors together...[as a result you have] satisfied readers who want to buy more books, while the books provide a reflection of the *volk*'s spiritual life'.²³ These words confirm a focus on the symbolic or cultural capital associated with Afrikaans literature and culture, but the mention of a satisfied reader also evokes an interest in financial capital and the importance of reaching markets.

Establishment of Tafelberg

Tafelberg Uitgewers was founded in 1951 as a branch or imprint of Die Goeie Hoop Uitgewers to publish 'light' books.²⁴ Die Goeie Hoop – 'The Good Hope' – refers to the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tip of South Africa, while Tafelberg (Table Mountain) is the iconic flat-topped landmark in Cape Town. Both publishers were established in the Western Cape, and the naming thus signifies and emphasises their location. This location is important because the Western Cape was considered the centre of Afrikaans publishing and literature. There was thus a specific association with Afrikaner identity as well as politics: Barzillai (Blaar) Coetzee, a Member of Parliament of the United Party, was the founder and chairman of Die Goeie Hoop Uitgewers and Tafelberg. Initially heavily critical of the National Party as a socialist, he eventually became an NP Member of Parliament in Vereeniging in 1958.²⁵ When Tafelberg

²² "Die geskiedenis van Tafelberg-Uitgewery" (Tafelberg-Uitgewers, n.d.), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

²³ "Die geskiedenis van Tafelberg-Uitgewery," op. cit. (n. 22). This quote, and those following, have all been translated by the researchers.

²⁴ W. D. Beukes, *Boekewêreld : Die Nasionale Pers in Die Uitgewersbedryf Tot 1990* (Kaapstad : Kaapstad 1992), 160; "Tafelberg Geskiedenis" (Tafelberg-Uitgewers, n.d.), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

²⁵ J. Froneman, "Blaar Coetzee: Politikus en man agter briewe van Bubbles se 'moordenaar,'" *Netwerk24*, 2022, sec. Netwerk24, <https://www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/stemme/menings/blaar-coetzee-politikus-en-man-agter-briewe-van-bubbles-se-moordenaar-20220304>.

was registered as a business, Coetzee appointed J. D. Pretorius – an accountant from Coca-Cola – as manager.²⁶ Pretorius had no prior experience in the publishing industry, but was very good at marketing and finances. The success of the publishing house is often ascribed to his business savvy – and his background indicates that the initial focus of the publisher was commercial capital and a mass market.

Die Goeie Hoop Uitgewers was established as a *boekskema*, or book scheme, akin to a book club, to meet and stimulate an increasing demand for Afrikaans reading material after World War II. At this time, almost all local publishers had their own book club; this is how many of their books were sold in the absence of a well-developed bookselling distribution network. Book clubs were also important for developing literacy among the broad Afrikaans-speaking market, following the success of Nasionale Pers's '*Leer die Afrikaner lees*' ('Teach the Afrikaner to read') books by C. J. Langenhoven. Tafelberg followed the same pattern as Die Goeie Hoop by sending books left over from previous print runs to members for free, a strategy to attract new readers at a low cost or risk. However, Tafelberg had no backlist or reserves of old titles, so when the publisher Unie-Volkspers was liquidated, Tafelberg bought the rights to their titles.²⁷

Over time, Pretorius would move Tafelberg away from its original association with the book club. Tafelberg's branding reflects a shift from the initial focus on a *boekskema* to a professional publishing house, producing their own titles. The original, somewhat generic logo for the Tafelberg Boekskema (Image 1) gives way to a combination of a book and the iconic Table Mountain (Image 2, as seen on a catalogue from 1958). Later, the logo was redesigned to its current form, of a man kneeling and writing on a tablet.

²⁶ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 160.

²⁷ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 160.

Image 1: Tafelberg Boekskema's logo (1951). (Source: www.abebooks.com).

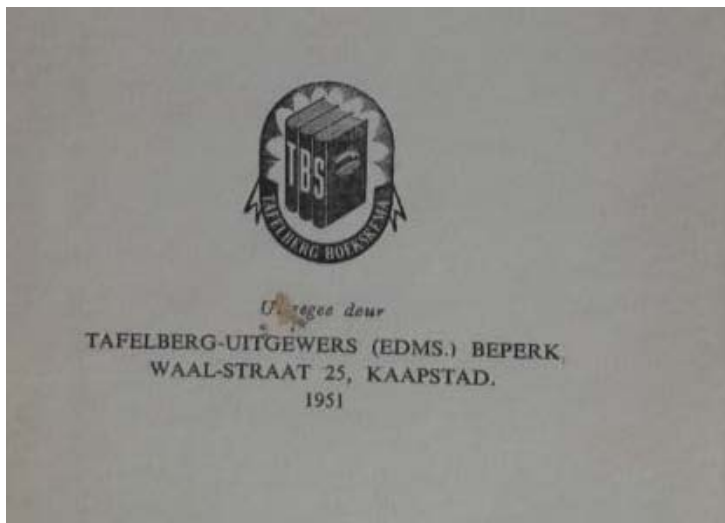


Image 2: Tafelberg's August catalogue from 1958. (Source: Amazwi: South African Museum of Literature).

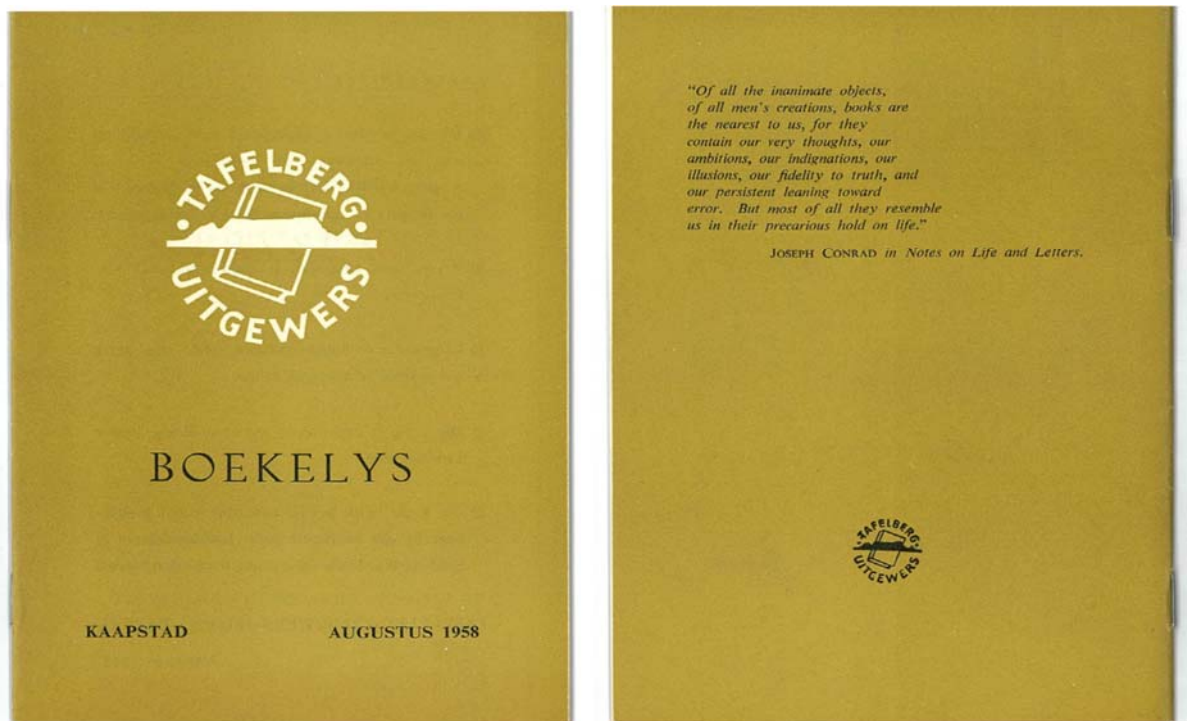


Image 3: Tafelberg's current logo. (Source: <https://www.nb.co.za/Tafelberg>).



During the 1950s, the Afrikaner political and cultural elite was pushing to create a more literate, and literary, *volk*. This meant there was an emphasis placed on publishing more literary titles as well as ‘light reading materials’ intended for mass consumption.²⁸ . Aimed at a general mass-market audience, Tafelberg’s books were decidedly middlebrow, and even considered low quality by some commentators, although they were attractively packaged as hardbacks. However, the publisher chose to market them in terms more closely associated with highbrow books associated with symbolic rather than commercial capital.²⁹ For example, in a 1951 edition of the women’s magazine *Huisgenoot*, a Tafelberg advertisement boasted that new book club members would receive ‘masterpieces’, ‘brilliant’ novels written by ‘the best writers and selected by our selection committee’; moreover, the books were all ‘beautifully printed’ and ‘the country’s best editors’ had worked on the titles.³⁰ This could be considered an example of the exaggerated marketing used to advertise books of ‘lesser quality’, but it also shows Pretorius’ marketing strategy, which may have backfired if readers started to mistrust the advertising.

These advertisements also show that Tafelberg’s their aspirations were to publish more serious titles as well, aimed at a more discerning market. This may be seen in the first of their non-book club titles, *Man van Ciréne* (1957) by F. A. Venter, which was successful both from the point of view of literary critics (i.e. symbolic capital) and profitable due to its

²⁸ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 160.

²⁹ J. C. Steyn as quoted in H. P. Van Coller, *Perspektief & profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis. Deel 3*, Tweede uitgawe. (Pretoria: Van Schaik 2016), p. 397.

³⁰ As quoted in Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 161.

popularity (i.e. commercial capital).³¹ This aim was boosted by several authors who were already established and influential in the Afrikaans literary scene deciding to publish with Tafelberg rather than other publishers. Some were actively commissioned by the editors at Tafelberg, while others were seeking a new alternative to the existing publishing houses. The celebrated author André P. Brink, for example, published a novella with Tafelberg in 1958, *Die meul teen die hang* (although he refused to work with them after they became part of the Nasionale Pers stable). D. J. Opperman, arguably one of the best known and most prestigious poets in South African literary history, also brought his poetry to Tafelberg, with the collection *Blom en Baaierd* appearing in 1956.³² Publishing Opperman's work suggests Tafelberg was able to quickly insert itself into a broader network or community of Afrikaans literary authors, in part due to the connections of its founders and directors. Using well-known authors as readers also helped to improve the symbolic capital of the publisher. In archival documents, there is also regular mention of how proud Tafelberg was of their prize-winning titles – including the Hertzog Prize³³, the leading Afrikaans literary award – and how they displayed these awards as proof of the quality of their publications. Tafelberg's archives also reveal that several of their titles were 'translated and distributed abroad, including works by Venter, P. H. Nortje and Jan J. van der Post'.³⁴

Consolidation under Nasionale Pers

But Tafelberg did not remain independent for long. Nasionale Boekhandel (NB) – Nasionale Pers' book publishing arm – saw that Tafelberg could be a threat to them and thus acquired the company in 1959.³⁵ The biggest threat was that by this time, Tafelberg had several titles that could be prescribed as part of the school curriculum – in other words, they could have taken hold as a significant player in the schoolbook market. Besides, as a trade publisher they were

³¹ "Tafelberg Geskiedenis." Tafelberg-Uitgewers, n.d. Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

³² "DJ Opperman (1914–1985)," LitNet, April 27, 2017, <https://www.litnet.co.za/dj-opperman-1914-1985/>.

³³ The prize was founded in 1915 and named in honour of J. B. M. Hertzog, the politician who had formed the National Party a year earlier. This was a highly politicized, state-sponsored award, which was intended to strengthen the link between Afrikaner nationalism and print culture.

³⁴ "Tafelberg Geskiedenis," op. cit. (n. 31).

³⁵ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 165.

attracting influential authors, they had several titles being reprinted, and a relatively successful book club of 5 000 members.³⁶ Froneman³⁷ writes that:

It cost the company a hefty £62 500, but Tafelberg became the pearl in Naspers' publishing crown. For decades Tafelberg publishers stood out for its quality books. Who would have guessed that the publisher had highly populist beginnings under Coetzee [Tafelberg's founder]?

Being acquired by Nasionale Pers oriented Tafelberg's editorial strategies further towards profit motives – although the above quote seems to indicate a perception that the shift was from 'populist' and commercially successful titles to more highbrow 'quality books'. By 1970, Nasionale Pers decided to consolidate all of Nasionale Boekhandel's general trade publications under the Tafelberg imprint. Tafelberg thus became the biggest general trade publisher in the country in terms of both titles and sales.³⁸ This was a commercial decision – the merger meant Tafelberg could better focus on and market all of Nasionale Pers' trade titles:

Tafelberg acquired Nasionale Boekhandel's writers and books, so their 455 titles in their 1969 catalogue rose to 1077 in 1970. In addition, the young publisher breathed new life into some of Nasionale Boekhandel's old titles. The net operating profit grew from R75 300 in 1969-1970 to R120 000 the following year.³⁹

The merger with Nasionale Pers and convergence of their publishing strategies has resulted in a conflation of NB and Tafelberg – not only by readers and researchers, but within the organisation as well. For example, in an unpublished internal history of Tafelberg produced during the 1970s, their development is described in these terms:

'From 1917 to 1940, the company published 1 100 books (new titles and reprints) and a total of 3 224 581 copies. In the period 1951 – 1965 it increased to 5 290 titles (new and reprints) and 34 387 475 copies – including schoolbooks. Currently, Tafelberg publishes around 225 new titles and reprints

³⁶ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 166.

³⁷ Froneman, art. cit. (n. 25).

³⁸ "Tafelberg Geskiedenis", op. cit. (n. 31), Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 177; p. 278.

³⁹ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 278.

annually and prints around 1 000 000 copies (1 397 titles and 5 930 302 copies the past six years'.⁴⁰

As this source shows, the histories of Tafelberg and Nasionale Boekhandel are woven together: these figures start at 1917, which is the date that Nasionale Pers first began publishing books, and *not* Tafelberg which was founded in 1951. Furthermore, the production and sales figures combine titles produced by both NB and Tafelberg. The conflation of NB and Tafelberg means that the publisher has rarely been seen as a separate entity, but rather as a subsidiary or imprint of the much larger Nasionale Boekhandel. Its original identity was quickly subsumed by NB.

The merger also meant closer ties to the Afrikaans political and cultural centres of power, which had implications for Tafelberg's vision and mission, since the Nasionale Pers was notoriously closely linked to the NP government and strongly associated with their political views (even if not all writers and employees shared the same sentiments).⁴¹ The 1960s and 1970s saw a sharp increase in repression, including in the sphere of freedom of expression and print culture. The foundations for what would become the apartheid censorship system were laid in 1954 when the government launched a Commission of Inquiry to combat 'the evil of indecent, offensive or harmful literature'.⁴² The report's recommendations were encapsulated in the first apartheid-era censorship legislation, the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963 (amended in 1974). Even as Afrikaans was being promoted as a literary language, then, the government was also seeking to restrict what could (and *should*) be published and read by the ordinary Afrikaner. It could be argued that, during this time, there were tensions between symbolic capital and financial capital, but also a divergence between different kinds of symbolic capital – including literary, cultural, and political in terms of nationalist identity – which constitutes an expansion of Bourdieu's original concept of symbolic capital.⁴³ As this case study demonstrates, more than one kind of symbolic capital may be associated with print culture, and sometimes they are at odds with each other.

Given this nexus of different kinds of capital, decision making for the publishers would have involved careful weighing of literary, political and financial factors, since refusal or publication could affect both their reputation and livelihood. Some sources mention that

⁴⁰ "Die geskiedenis van Tafelberg-Uitgewery", op. cit. (n. 22).

⁴¹ Rabe, op. cit. (n. 15), p. 27.

⁴² P. D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press 2009), p. 23.

⁴³ In this case 'nationalist' refers to the capital gained with regards to favour with the nationalist government, and what was associated with the 'volk' or white Afrikaner at this point.

Nasionale Pers' policy had them reject several authors and their works, based on the content being 'inappropriate for society at the time'.⁴⁴ Nasionale Pers were particularly conservative in their decisions to publish because of their political affiliations and their associated reputation. In contrast, being rejected by Nasionale Pers was later even seen as a status symbol for certain kinds of authors. For Tafelberg, this meant that there were limits to what could be accepted for publication. However, Tafelberg is not as directly associated with the nationalist cause as Nasionale Pers was, perhaps in part because the newspapers were seen as mouthpieces to a greater extent than the books. While they contributed to developing a literate Afrikaner community, the evidence shows that their goals were more financial than political.

In the following section, Tafelberg's marketing materials, advertisements and letters to booksellers will be examined as exemplars of how they framed themselves and their publishing philosophy. As their success grew, Tafelberg experimented with a variety of titles and niche markets, publishing across a broad range of genres including English children's literature, non-fiction and biographies, religious books, DIY, dictionaries and even some schoolbooks.⁴⁵ This broad-based output is described in the *Sarie Marais* magazine⁴⁶ as 'a basket full of books'; and they go on to list 'another thick Kosalik⁴⁷, TV favourites, excellent poetry from Cussons, sex education for boys, religious books for the seeker'. As this quote shows, 'One of the publisher's biggest successes was in the market for light reading and was the translated edition of the work of the German author Heinz G. Kosalik'.⁴⁸ A draft publicity blurb in the archive describes their broad, popular publishing focus:

What does the satisfied reader want? Virtually everything: a good story, a book on cattle diseases, current poetry and national verses, dictionaries by the dozen, religion, advice on difficult teenagers, a medical discussion on birth control, a scientific work on moths, history, biographies, Psalm 23 illustrated with photos...The list is like life – shaded and endless.⁴⁹

This broad range illustrates the progress made in creating an Afrikaans reading market.

⁴⁴ Muller, op. cit. (n. 13), p. 499; F. Galloway and R. Venter as quoted in Van Coller, op. cit. (n. 28), p. 385.

⁴⁵ Beukes et al., op. cit. (n. 24), p. 304; p. 308; p. 311.

⁴⁶ "Winter '78!" (Sarie Marais 1978), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

⁴⁷ One of the publisher's biggest successes in the market for light reading was the translated work of the German author Heinz G. Kosalik (1921-1999); the first Kosalik title on their list appeared in 1960. Worldwide, Kosalik's books have sold more than 80 million copies in a number of languages; he wrote popular fiction, often with a WWII theme. See his website: <https://kosalik.de/about/>.

⁴⁸ Galloway and Venter as quoted in Van Coller, op. cit. (n. 29), pp. 405–6.

⁴⁹ "Die geskiedenis van Tafelberg-Uitgewery", op. cit. (n. 22).

Tafelberg regularly published marketing material advertising their books, either directly or in magazines, with headlines like *Verryk Usel!* (1979) [Enrich yourself!], *Winter '79, Treffers: Koop nou – Boeke vir Kersfees* (1979) [Hits: Buy now – Books for Christmas], *Treffers '77* and so forth. The language used in their marketing materials provides a clear indication of their mission, and of the financial and cultural capital which they prioritised:

'Die vreugde en bevrediging uit Tafelberg-boeke is nie vatbaar vir inflasie, is nie onderhewig aan devaluasie'.⁵⁰ (The joy and contentment from Tafelberg books are not influenced by inflation or devaluation.)

This marketing statement was probably created because the price of books had gone up and was used to encourage readers to buy books regardless. The broader context was of a sharp deterioration in the South African economy as the country's appeal to foreign investors diminished and political unrest grew. At the same time, Tafelberg, like many Afrikaner-supported businesses, also benefited from a lack of competition due to international companies disinvesting and a lack of competing media. The apartheid government opposed the introduction of television for decades, for instance, with a regular television service only arriving in 1976. This was to better control the flow of information, and to limit the dissemination of 'communism and immorality'.⁵¹ This restriction benefited book and magazine publishers.

Moreover, Tafelberg was potentially trying to position itself as a safe haven for its majority white readers, not making them think about uncomfortable topics like repression and inequality. This may be seen in advertising that literally emphasises insularity and turning inwards against 'threats', as in the women's magazine *Sarie Marais* (1976), which advertised '*n Toormiddel teen die dreigende Winter*' ['A potion against the threatening winter']. The advertorial below reiterates this messaging:

*'Dis wintertyd. Die dae is kort, die aande lank. Triestig buite, maar binne knus.
En voor die kaggel – ingerol met 'n boek – is net die plek. Want dis nou*

⁵⁰ "Verryk Usel!" (Tafelberg Uitgewers 1976), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

⁵¹ K. Le Roux. "On This Day in 1976 South Africa Became One of the Last Countries to Get TV." (CapeTalk, January 5 2017). <https://www.capetalk.co.za/articles/238124/sabc-tv-turns-40>.

warmte: om ook van binne die warmte te voel. Help u gerus aan Tafelberg se winterboeke. Dit sit die warmte terug'.⁵²

It's wintertime. The days are short, the nights are long. Miserable outside, but cosy inside. And in front of the fireplace – rolled up with a book – is just the place. Because that's the best kind of warmth: to also feel warmth from the inside. Help yourself to Tafelberg's winter books. It puts the warmth back.

Similarly, the following advertisement, while emphasising commercial aims, highlights the importance of family, shared experience and community:

'Daar is min geskenke so blywend, so betekenisvol en so kosbaar as 'n mooi boek. Want jy gee nie net 'n boek present nie, maar 'n hele nuwe ervaringswêreld. Met min geskenke kan jy soveel verskillende mense bereik as met 'n boek – familie, vriende, kennisse – want vir iedereen is daar 'n besondere boekwêreld waarin hy hom kan verdiep. Maak die gee die moeite werd. Gee 'n boek – 'n boek gee meer'.⁵³

There are few gifts as lasting, meaningful and precious as a beautiful book. Because a book is not only a gift, but a whole new world of experience. There are few gifts that can reach as many different people as a book can – family, friends, acquaintances – because for each one there is a special book-world they can dive into. Make the giving worthwhile. Give a book – a book gives more.

These advertisements use the common marketing tactic of encouraging the target audience to buy books during specific seasons or at Christmastime, which coincides with the summer holidays in South Africa. They also focus on the pleasurable experience of reading a book, which reflects that they are promoting mass market books for the purposes of entertainment or leisure reading, not those of high literary value. As these examples show, Tafelberg saw themselves as a mass-market, commercial publisher, and they were happy to emphasise this role. Even with several prize-winning titles, their list, they argued, could 'leave the impression that Tafelberg focuses on knowledge, culture and similar things only. *Indeed not*' [emphasis

⁵² "Boeke sit die warmte terug" (Tafelberg Uitgewers 1975), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

⁵³ "Gee 'n Boek - 'n Boek Gee Meer" (Tafelberg Uitgewers 1973), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

added].⁵⁴ The discourse used in the marketing material indicates a proactive system of advertising their titles, not only to their readers but also the important clients, the booksellers, which supported the commercial side of their business. Their broad publishing list can be seen in this summary of a typical year, 1983:

‘In 1983, Tafelberg published three novels (which sold 7 174 titles by the end of 1984), five short prose collections (sales figure: 5 088); three poetry collections (sales figure: 2 979) and two plays (sales figure: 1 200). The total sales figure of ‘high literature’ during this time was thus 16 411; at the same time Tafelberg sold 3 830 copies of two popular prose texts and 91 526 copies of popular fiction titles’.⁵⁵

This shows that Tafelberg did produce literary titles (considered ‘high literature’) but their popular fiction was more than five times as successful. It is thus unsurprising that an annual report from the year 1987/1988 indicates it was the best year Tafelberg experienced in its history, regarding both turnover and profits.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, in spite of the commercial success of the popular fiction titles, Tafelberg maintained a steady presence as a more literary publisher. Their success in this regard is measured more in critical reception and awards than in sales – symbolic capital, rather than financial capital. For instance, Tafelberg won the CNA prize⁵⁷ five years in a row, from 1985 to 1989, and was the publisher with the most CNA prizes ever, with 14 out of 30 awards.⁵⁸ This achievement should be tempered by the fact that the prize was mostly awarded to just a few prominent publishers.

Analysis of the publishing list reveals that Tafelberg avoided politically controversial titles, both because of strong ties to Afrikaner nationalism and the risk of censorship and bad publicity. For instance, they published fewer avant-garde Afrikaans authors of the *Sestigers* movement than similar publishers such as Human & Rousseau. In addition, only a few political titles appear on their list between 1970-1980, and most of these were published because the

⁵⁴ “Tafelberg Geskiedenis”, op. cit. (n. 31).

⁵⁵ F. Galloway. “Sisteemtendense in die Afrikaanse literatuur: ’n bestekopname van 1983.” *Literator* 8, no. 2 (May 7 1987), p. 4.

⁵⁶ Tafelberg Uitgewers, “Jaarverslag: Tafelberg 1987/1988,” Annual Report (Tafelberg Uitgewers, 1988), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

⁵⁷ The CNA prize for Afrikaans and English works was established by the book chain CNA in 1961 and ran until 1997. The award has a distinguished history – it was a marketing tool that aided literature, and winners included big names like André P. Brink, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee.

⁵⁸ “CNA-Pryse die een na die ander,” (*Die Burger* 1989), p. 6.

authors were well known and they stood a strong chance of winning an award. In a letter from 1982, they mention the political situation in a letter to a bookseller:

‘In the midst of the past week’s political convulsions⁵⁹, two Tafelberg books by Professor Willie Esterhuysen have come into the limelight. *Apartheid must die*, which has won the “Sunday Times” prize of R2500 for the best South African political book of 1981; and *Die pad van hervorming* [The road to reform], which has just been published and is being serialized in “Die Burger”, “Beeld”, “Volksblad” and “Oosterlig” during this week’.⁶⁰

The titles may have been published to capitalise on changes in the political situation, but the books were also published for commercial reasons as good sales were predicted. Their marketing material thus shows they are ‘very proud of our awarded authors’ but their books ‘without prizes are just as outstanding’.⁶¹ Overall, Tafelberg’s list remained one of a mass-market publisher, although they continued to publish more critically acclaimed literature.

Rebranding in the 1990s

The 1990s saw the end of apartheid in South Africa, as ‘the official democratisation of South Africa in the 1990s meant that changes in the field of power were drastically accelerated’.⁶² In this period, the political and social environment again directly impacted on print culture. In a period of change and rebranding, many publishers had to adapt their philosophies. It has been suggested that some publishers’ intentions were more profit-driven than genuinely supportive of transformation:

‘One did not feel that the publishers’ practice was informed by a genuine conviction that participation in the transformation of the country, upholding the

⁵⁹ This is referring to the split between more liberal and more deeply conservative factions in the National Party in early 1982. Discussions at the time claimed the split “delivered the *coup de grace* to the traditional image of white South African politics” Craig Charney, “Class Conflict and the National Party Split,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10, no. 2 (April 1 1984), p. 269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057078408708082..>

⁶⁰ “Tafelberg Nuusbrief” (Tafelberg Uitgewers, March 1982), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

⁶¹ “Die geskiedenis van Tafelberg-Uitgewery”, op. cit. (n. 22).

⁶² Botma, op.cit. (n. 21), p. 118.

principles of democracy, reaching out to the broader population and tapping into the broader knowledge base of the population would create good business'.⁶³

Wafawarowa has criticised publishers for branding themselves as culturally sensitive, and showing an awareness of the importance of cultural capital – while at the same time actually focusing their efforts on the financial aspects of their business. Their cultural motives were frequently claimed to be about nation-building, while the concept of 'nation' was being redefined in the post-apartheid democracy.

After 1994, Afrikaner culture and the Afrikaans language became notably less valuable for Nasionale Pers in terms of its ability to be transformed into social and symbolic capital.⁶⁴ Not only did Nasionale Pers lose its powerful political ally of more than half a century when the National Party government left office, but the company also had to reposition itself quickly in terms of the new political imaginaries – the multicultural community of the 'new South Africa'. Nasionale Pers had to accommodate a new political reality, while at the same time maintaining their Afrikaner, mostly white, support base⁶⁵, as:

'too drastic a political repositioning at that stage could have threatened their ability to compete for economic and cultural capital in the changing field of cultural production. At the same time, the changing political and socioeconomic landscape since 1994 meant that Naspers had to move away, and also be seen to move away, from any racial and religious interests, especially those that could directly link the company to its apartheid history'.⁶⁶

In 1998, Nasionale Pers shortened their name to Naspers to further distance themselves from their nationalist image, although they did not want to do away with the name completely. The publisher also restructured and became a public company with a diverse ownership and audience base through the sale of shares to emerging black entrepreneurs.⁶⁷ In addition to political changes, Naspers also had to respond to new economic pressures, including a worldwide decline in the media industry in the late 1990s. One of their key strategies in this

⁶³ B. Wafawarowa. "Publishing After a Decade of Democracy." *IFAS Working Paper Series / Les Cahiers de l'IFAS* 6 2005, p. 45–50.

⁶⁴ Botma, op. cit. (n. 21), p. 118.

⁶⁵ M. Dlodla, "Hustle and Flow! : An Analysis of Naspers' Operationalization as Reported by Prominent South African Newspaper Publications over a Three-Year Period." (Thesis, 2017), p. 66.

⁶⁶ Botma, op. cit. (n. 21), p. 118.

⁶⁷ Botma, op. cit. (n. 21), p. 118.

time was diversification through acquisitions, both locally and in other countries. For instance, Naspers acquired the independent South African publisher Jonathan Ball in 1991, the South African branch of HarperCollins in 1994, and Lux Verbi, a religious trade publisher, in 1999. They also established a distribution company, On the Dot, in 2000.⁶⁸ They strongly focused on new technology by starting the internet service provider MWeb in 1997, launching their online platform Media24 and the electronic book retailer Kalahari.net. In addition, they introduced sports and financial portals in China, expanded MWeb to Indonesia, invested in pay-television channels such as Mnet, DSTV and OpenTV, and acquired shares in QQ, a fast-message service in China.⁶⁹

In spite of its diversification and investments in new technology, from 1999-2002 Naspers experienced losses of more than a billion rand (500 million US dollars, using today's exchange rates). Naspers tried to save money on all fronts, closed certain businesses and laid off more than 2 000 members of staff.⁷⁰ However, Ton Vosloo, managing director of Naspers from 1984, downplayed these unprofitable years in his memoir, suggesting that 'except for a short while in 2001 when the so-called dotcom-bubble burst, Naspers never recorded overall losses between the years of 1950-2017'.⁷¹ As the book publishing division became less important, both financially and culturally, it suffered from the rationalisation efforts. Naspers restructured all of its publishing companies and imprints and updated their marketing and distribution, described by Tafelberg's manager Hannes van Zyl using the commercial discourse of 'reform(ing) their operational effectiveness according to international norms'.⁷² The general (fiction) publishers were restructured as subsidiaries of a single over-arching publisher, NB. Thus, over a period of four years after 1998 Tafelberg, along with Human & Rousseau, Kwela and Queillerie, as well as the general list of J.L. van Schaik and the dictionary publisher Pharos, consolidated into one.⁷³ It could be argued that, in addition to minimising financial losses, the company may have consolidated the different publishers in order to strengthen their new image – different publishers with different voices standing together to represent Naspers – and

⁶⁸ S. T. Mosime, 'Naspers Media Group : Ethnic Past and Global Present. Media Firms, Class and Ethnic Identities during the Age of Convergence and Expansion - the Case of Naspers in the First Decade of the 21st Century', in: *Global Media Journal - African Edition* 8:1 (2014), p. 72.

⁶⁹ Mosime, art. cit. (n. 68), p. 73.

⁷⁰ H. van Zyl, 'Aanpassing in die uitgewersbedryf: Die geval van NB-Uitgewers rondom die millenniumwending', in: *Werkwinkel : a journal of Low Countries and South African studies*, 2(1): 2007, p. 94.

⁷¹ T. Vosloo. *Oor Grense: 'n Lewe in die media in 'n tyd van verandering* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Uitgewers 2018), p. 44.

⁷² van Zyl, art. cit. (n. 70), p. 94.

⁷³ S. Nieuwoudt, 'Boekbaas sê Nuwe Werke Gee Mens Hoop vir Toekoms,' in: *Die Beeld*, August 1, 2001; van Zyl, art. cit. (n. 70), p. 118.

bringing them all together under one roof may have been the easiest way to do that. It may also have been a way to minimise risk, by having a mixed portfolio.

Naspers' strategic repositioning in the post-apartheid era was focused on keeping their Afrikaner audience, while at the same time trying to position themselves as being more inclusive, focusing in particular on non-white Afrikaans readers. Their cultural or symbolic capital built on their support of Afrikaner cultural endeavours, while moving away from the negative stigma of their past associations by encouraging diversity. Simultaneously, many of their decisions were based on the financial promotion of the company and it saw them branching out in various areas like television and technology.

This repositioning can also be traced in archival documents from Tafelberg. In 1994, Tafelberg produced a new mission statement, which is an important primary document to be used to analyse their attempts at rebranding. The mission statement did not reveal many changes apart from vague references to social objectives. For a start, the focus remained on a very broad range of general trade books, as well as books for students and school pupils. The publication of schoolbooks was described as a social objective: they emphasised that they believe in 'continuous education [because] through it we help create a better world.' However, in practical terms an investment in the schoolbook market indicated a focus on financial capital.

The focus in the redrafted mission statement was on three groups: readers, shareholders, and authors, and to some extent their employees. While emphasising how well they catered to the needs of their readers, their main business objective seemed to be profit, and keeping their shareholders happy. They explained that to reach this objective, they strove for 'optimal profits through stable ongoing growth, dynamic and goal-oriented marketing and responsible management.' They described the importance of fostering good relationships with authors by developing them and meeting their needs. In turn, authors would want to publish their titles with Tafelberg, considering their policy of publishing good-quality books, and staff would want to be part of a publisher which (according to their statement) held high prestige. With a statement like 'the only thing we want to be measured by is the quality of our products' the publisher may have attempted to distance themselves from politics and any association with political history.

Lastly, they underlined that they 'believe in the future, our country and all its people. But above all we believe in the directing hand of the Almighty who makes everything possible.'

This statement points to the fact that they wanted to show that they supported the new democratic South Africa, and that they were no longer in support of only one kind of people (whether it be Afrikaans, or white people). At the same time, they specifically also mentioned the Christian faith. Keeping this aspect of their brand the same may indicate that they were continuing to publish for a certain kind of reader; it also showed dedication to Afrikaner Christian values. This reflects a specific culture and cultural identity, even in the face of transformation; a desire to change (or at least to appear to change) but at the same time hold onto their loyal existing base of readers and authors.

The changes signalled in this mission statement can be compared to the actual publishing output. Tafelberg did make some attempt to increase their diversity by starting to publishing writers of colour in the 1990s, with a continued emphasis on Afrikaans titles. For example, in 1996, *Deur die oog van 'n naald* [Through the eye of a needle], a book of poetry by Mathews Phosa, was published. This was significant because Phosa is a black writer who had strong ties to the African National Congress. His poetry had strong themes about reconciliation, which was a canny choice for a publisher wishing to depict itself as more inclusive in the choice of their authors and themes. However, the proportion of black authors remained very small overall, and the language of publishing was only diversified to include English, and to a small extent other South African languages, very recently.

Most of the publishing decisions reflected in the publishing output can be seen as profit-driven. For instance, one significant shift in the publishing list, which was not specifically mentioned in their mission statement, was a growing focus on non-fiction including cookbooks, crafts, self-help and DIY, sports and politics. By 1996 the list actually shows more focus on non-fiction titles, especially those that examine the political situation and the history of South Africa, as well as spiritual or religious titles. This is important because non-fiction sells better than fiction in South Africa, and it appears that the traditional Afrikaans readership still enjoys the same genres as previously.

Another strategy, which can be related to both financial and symbolic capital, was the repackaging of a number of backlist titles as part of a classics series. The series reprinted a number of titles published in the past fifty years which were no longer in print from two NB imprints, Human & Rousseau and Tafelberg.⁷⁴ Introducing a classics series is considered a

⁷⁴ K. van der Merwe, 'Klassiek dog die tyd vooruit', in: *Insig*, 30 June (2003). SA Media.

low-risk means to improve cash flow, as the fixed costs of producing the titles have already been recovered. At the same time, the series provided the opportunity to revive titles with historical and cultural importance, and to remind the audience of the association between NB and two publishing imprints associated with Afrikaans literature. The publisher does have an impressive backlist with iconic, award-winning, and internationally known titles.

Today the book publishing division of Naspers falls under an umbrella company called Media24. This is a multinational media company, and their focus is on content rather than publishing, with a nod to the concept of storytelling: to ‘build communities through excellent journalism, smart technology and innovative services’ by telling ‘stories that matter’.⁷⁵ Naspers owns several publishing companies, including Collegium, NB Publishers, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Van Schaik Publishers and Via Afrika. NB, in turn, has several imprints: Tafelberg, but also Human & Rousseau, Queillerie, Best Books, Kwela, Pharos and Melinda Ferguson Books. An analysis of the NB Catalogue shows that trade books are not organised according to publisher or imprint, but rather genre: fiction, non-fiction, children and youth; as well as religious books, dictionaries and educational titles. The fact that the trade titles are all grouped together gives the impression that the imprints are not really separated from each other in terms of publishing philosophy. This means that publishing decisions for Tafelberg cannot be made independently which detracts from the individual identity of each publisher. In reality, there is not much differentiating the different trade imprints from each other, except their historical differences. Analysing the current publishing lists shows a very similar strategy with regards to decision-to-publish.

This assertion is backed up by looking at how they present themselves on their website and in marketing materials, as it appears that Tafelberg is still very much a general trade publisher, aiming to reach as wide an audience as possible. Tafelberg positions itself as being originally known for its Afrikaans literary fiction, with mention of several literary authors who have ‘found a home at Tafelberg.’ Looking at the new releases on Tafelberg’s website, there are a few things that can be inferred. Although there are various genres of novels (including crime and thrillers), romance titles are heavily advertised as part of their fiction list; these are primarily Afrikaans titles. The non-fiction list contains a combination of political, business and historical novels, and in this category, there does not seem to be a specific preference for English or Afrikaans. On their children’s list, there is some focus on not just English and

⁷⁵ ‘About Media24,’ May 27, 2022, 24, <https://www.media24.com/about-us/>.

Afrikaans titles but also African languages. The African language books show an attempt at diversification and possibly entering a relatively untapped market. The non-fiction and specifically the political titles – sometimes controversial, as was seen with *The President's Keepers* (2017) and *Our poisoned land* (2022) by Jacques Pauw – are an indication that the reluctance to step into politics after 1994 has started to disappear.

Research indicates that the accumulation of financial capital has become the most important factor for managers at Naspers' publishers to consider when selecting a title for publication. Nevertheless, the repackaging of their backlist does show an attempt to accumulate cultural capital as well. In addition, the publishers remain prolific producers of Afrikaans titles, which may represent a new Afrikaner identity. In the years since the end of apartheid, many Afrikaners have attempted to disassociate the language from the negative connotations of the past, while remaining proud of the culture.

Conclusion

The establishment of Tafelberg came at a time when the Afrikaans language was growing and developing, actively supported by the government and Afrikaner capital. Tafelberg originally focused on publishing easy-reading titles, although over time they supplemented their list with more literary and prestigious titles. The publisher was acquired by Nasionale Pers after just a few years, which meant that their editorial strategies had to conform with the larger organisation. As a result, in the sources, the history of the two publishers is often conflated. During the times of political turmoil, Tafelberg remained largely uninvolved with political debate, while still publishing some of South Africa's most well-known authors, both literary and popular.

In the 1990s, strategies changed, and Nasionale Pers – who became Naspers – and their publishers had to reinvent themselves to be shown to move away from their nationalistic image. For the publishers, reinvention meant that their lists had to become more inclusive in terms of race and to some extent language, as well as genre – the democratic government brought with it freedom of speech, which was freeing for authors and publishers. The structural and economic changes that took place in the early 2000s also had significant implications for publishing strategies, and with financial constraints in mind publishers had to be more discerning in their decisions to publish. This has had a lasting impact on their lists because it has intensified their focus on profitability and mass-market appeal. Another consequence has

been that, over time, the imprints that are part of NB Publishers have grown very similar in terms of their decision-making processes and even their brands. It can be argued that it is important to keep the brand and social capital that was built up by each of NB's imprints before they were acquired by Nasionale Pers. Potentially this is why the imprints have kept their names at NB Publishers while actually functioning as a whole.

Literary histories tend to emphasise that South African society attaches more value to highbrow (restricted production) literature than to lowbrow (mass production) literature⁷⁶, as Bourdieu describes. The cultural or symbolic value of books is determined by readers (the intended audience), authors and critics. However, the case study of Tafelberg reveals that diverse kinds of cultural capital may be related to the publisher's output and perceptions of its role in society. In Tafelberg's case, Afrikaner identity and the cultural or social capital associated with the language perhaps played a more significant role in the publishers' impact on society, than their limited range of literary titles which accrued a different kind of symbolic capital. At the same time, they followed a financially focused publishing strategy, recognising that more sales are achieved with lowbrow than highbrow titles. Tafelberg attempted to present itself as straddling all of these kinds of capital, marketing itself as a family publisher, with a title available for every member of the family – while also producing high quality, literary titles and influential authors. Their early connection to Nasionale Pers also lent them a certain kind of social capital.

The cultural or symbolic capital of books is thus fluid and changes over time as the needs or perceptions of readers, authors and other publishers change. For publishers, this makes their decisions to publish difficult: different sources indicate that currently publishers are more likely to consider the financial implications of publishing a title first, but that the cultural impact might have longer lasting effects.⁷⁷ A number of recent publishing decisions can be seen to be financially motivated, although Tafelberg continues to publish highbrow titles that sell in smaller numbers. In addition, a certain kind of symbolic capital will be gained even in the case of what is considered a more popular title, depending on the audience. For publishers, this means that they need to be attuned to their intended audience (both readers, authors and

⁷⁶ Boehmer as quoted in Attwell and Attridge, op. cit. (n. 17), p. 257.

⁷⁷ H. van Zyl, 'Danie van Niekerk: Hulde Aan Die Uitgewer', in: LitNet, February 16, 2022, <https://www.litnet.co.za/danie-van-niekerk-hulde-aan-die-uitgewer/>; "Tafelberg Missie" (Tafelberg-Uitgewers, 1994), Afrikaanse Nasionale Letterkunde Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

even peers), to know what the effect of the publication of a specific title may be, in order that they accumulate the right kind of capital, and develop the brand they intend.

Overall, Tafelberg has had significant cultural impact in South Africa, particularly with its involvement in the growth of Afrikaans literature and nationalism. The publisher has historically catered for mass markets, but in the publication of some significant literary Afrikaans authors, also elites. Traditionally, they have tried stay away from controversy, although this has changed in more recent years. Tafelberg is now an imprint of one of South Africa's publishing giants, and logically their editorial philosophy follows this imperative. They remain an important publisher of Afrikaans titles, even though their social and symbolic impact may have changed.