WITS IMAGINED: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WITS UNIVERSITY'S PUBLIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, 1922 - 1994

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A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Historical Studies

Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
2019

COMPULSORY DECLARATION
This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the public roles and responsibilities of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in the period 1922-1994. It does this through a close investigation of four moments in the history of the University, namely the foundation of Wits (1910s and 1920s); early debates about the entry of Black staff and students (1930s and 1940s); the Academic Freedom protests (starting in the mid-1950s) and the formation of the Wits History Workshop (from 1977 to the early 1990s). In each of these moments, social roles and perceptions of public responsibility were actively asserted or challenged through engagements between internal-university constituencies and external communities. The thesis identifies three core roles for Wits University over this period: providing technical and professional training; generating and authenticating expert knowledge and shaping people's ideas of citizenship. The practical and conceptual understandings of these three roles, however, have shifted over time as the University's conceptualisation of the communities it serves has changed. These shifts have happened in conversation with different civic and state actors. The thesis has found that ideas of the public roles of Wits are informed by an institutional sense of self-referential authority accumulated through various moments and practices in the University's history. This self-referential authority depends on a selective recalling of particular events and the ability of multiple narratives about the University's identity to circulate simultaneously. This self-referential authority draws on Wits' origins as an institution of late-Imperial modernity and its legacy as a so-called 'open' university. Understanding the practices and legacies that have created these narratives through an examination of the University's history, is particularly important in the present moment when the future public responsibilities of South African universities are being vigorously questions and debated.

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Acknowledgements:

The David and Elaine Potter Foundation and the NRF Chair in Archives and Public Culture generously provided primary financial support for this thesis. Thanks also go to the University of Cape Town's Humanities Faculty for support through their Postgraduate Completion Grant, 2019.

Special thanks to my supervisors, Prof. Carolyn Hamilton and Dr Bodhisattva Kar, as well as my colleagues in the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative for providing supportive critical feedback at each stage of this process.

Elizabeth Mariam, from the Wits Central Records Office (now at Wits Historical Papers), thank you for your support both in-person and via email as I learnt to navigate the Wits Archives.

This work is one of many that have been inspired by the students and workers who organised under the banners of RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall. These include my home institution of UCT and the subject of this study, Wits University, but also the Historically Black Institutions whose struggles pre-date 8 March 2015 yet continue to slip out of the public eye far too easily.

Lastly, to my friends and family who kept me going when the road to submission seemed never-ending, thank you for not letting me give up! A special mention to my Papa for the read-throughs, edits and special grocery deliveries throughout the process.

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

FMF – FeesMustFall

FOSATU – Federation of South African Trade Unions

HWI – Historically White Institutions

NUSAS – National Union of South African Students

RMF – RhodesMustFall

SRC – Students' Representative Council

UCT – The University of Cape Town

UWC – University of the Western Cape

Wits – The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

WHW – Wits History Workshop

WUP – Wits University Press

WYOH – Write Your Own History

A Note on Terminology

Language is an ever-evolving element of the human social world. Racial categorisation and the terminology associated with it pose a challenge for historians wanting to strike a balance between an authentic representation of the past, and the contemporary evolution of politics and social norms. My choice of language with regards to South African racial categorisation and description, while open to critique, aims to flag some of the complexities of this writing exercise. The majority of sources, both in the primary and secondary literature that this thesis draws on commonly use the terms “non-white” or “non-European” when referring to people of colour. It is not always clear who is included or excluded by these terms in the sources. I have tried as far as possible to substitute the terms “non-white” or “non-European” with “Black”, as a way of challenging the divisive politics of colonialism and Apartheid and reaffirming the humanity of people of colour. This understanding draws from definitions of the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s, which regained popularity amongst student-activists within the Fallist movements from 2015 onwards. I have not capitalised “white” as an adjective for people and institutions because the descriptive function is different from the political implications of terms like “Black” or “Western”, or even “Whiteness.” Where sources refer to “blacks” or “natives” as a sub-set of “non-white” of “non-Europeans” I have opted for the term “black African.” This happens predominantly where there is a need to differentiate between the experiences of people of colour within white institutions. Where racial terms appear in inverted commas (“”) it is to represent the terminology or categories applied by the state, the University or the South African Institute of Race Relations at the time. These inverted commas indicate ambiguity about how these labels were assigned and whether the people they describe self-identified with the labels or had them imposed by white institutions and structures.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Image 1: Academic staff and church leaders protest in support of students demanding free tertiary education at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, October 7, 2016. REUTERS/Siphiwe Sibeko

1. Introduction

i. Rationale & Context

Between 2015 and 2017, universities across South Africa became sites of heated protests in a manner unprecedented in the post-1994 era. Protestors rallied behind the call for "free, decolonised education,"[1] marking a shift away from the post-1994 narrative of political and social change through "transformation." The protestors accused universities, which has been legally desegregated in the 1990s, of failing in their public and social mandate of institutional change. The call for decolonisation revitalised South African public discourse about Higher Education and shifted measures of progress from focusing on access in numerical terms to include questions of quality, curriculum and the role of universities in addressing inequality in South Africa.

Collectively referred to as "Fallists"[2]; the student-worker alliance behind these landmark protests first broke into the national consciousness in February 2015 when a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, located in the centre of the University of Cape Town's campus, was defaced. The RhodesMustFall movement quickly materialized and demanded its immediate removal. This initial protest inspired similar local protests on some campuses, but the first organised, national mass-mobilisation of students happened under the banner of FeesMustFall in October 2015. Between 2015 and 2017, groups associated with "Fallism"[3] successfully wrested concessions from university managements and the national government.[4] Some of the issues taken up on different campuses included: university labour practices; sexism; homophobia; the accessibility of higher education; accommodation; safety and violence; and students' ability to succeed and graduate.

[1] Leigh-Ann Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa," in *Students Must Rise: Youth Struggles in South Africa Before and Beyond SOWETO '76*, ed. Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 180–89.
[2] *We Are No Longer at Ease: The Struggle for #FeesMustFall* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2018): xiii and xvi.
[3] "Fallism, which is best considered as a subset of #MustFall politics… is the ideological nexus of black consciousness, radical black feminism and Pan-Africanism working in conjunction with a protest culture informed by radical civil disobedience." Rekgotsofetse Chikane, *Breaking A Rainbow, Building a Nation* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2018), 117.
[4] These included the removal of the Rhodes statue at UCT, the 2016 fee freeze and, ultimately, a commitment by the state to provide qualified free higher-education for the poor in 2018.

Fallists adopted forms of organising and protest that were unfamiliar, particularly at historically white institutions.[5] These new forms of protest raised a series of questions about which citizens' voices get heard in different types of public spaces. Specifically, they questioned how the racialised histories of South African universities have resulted in the accommodation of different types of violence (both physical and symbolic) in line with the historic racial demographics of these institutions. The 2015 protests grabbed and held the attention of mainstream public discourse, in a way that previous protests about fees and access did not.[6] Authors Rekgotsofetse Chikane (2018) and Wandile Ngcaweni and Busani Ngcaweni (2018), argue that the prominence of historically white institutions such as UCT, Wits, Rhodes and Stellenbosch University was a significant factor in how much public attention the 2015 protest received.

The 2015 protests erupted in a national context where inequality and youth unemployment were major social issues. Many people seeking economic security and upward mobility consider university access essential.[7] However, while university student numbers have increased since the 1990s,[8] state subsidies for public universities have declined;[9] causing a crisis in terms of universities' ability to provide quality education at scale.[10] This thesis argues that at the heart of many of these criticisms was a question about the publicness of the university. For many

[5] These shifts included a perceived loss of legitmacy in elected student-representative bodies, as well as more disruptive modes of protest. According to Krystal Strong these changes in modes of protest "fundamentally unsettle" "civil society" models of protest, which tend to only be legible to the extent that they are "organised", "disciplined," and non-violent," and articulate coherent political demands upon the state. Krystal Strong, "Do African Lives Matter to Black Lives Matter? Youth Uprisings and the Borders of Solidarity," *Urban Education* 53, no. 2 (2018).

[6] Malcolm Ray, *Free Fall: Why South African Universities are in a Race Against Time* (Johannesburg: Bookstorm, 2016).

[7] *We are no longer at ease : the struggle for #FeesMustFall*. 60. & Chikane, *Breaking A Rainbow, Building a Nation*. 122.

[8]According to the Department of Higher Education and Training the number of students enrolled in public HEIs in 2016 was 975837. This marks in increase of 277% from the 1998 enrollment headcount 351786. Republic of South Africa, "Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2016" (Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Traininng, 2018). Interestingly, Cooper and Subotzky note that between 1993 and 1998, public HEI saw virtual stagnation of enrolment numbers, with only 1% growth rate over the five-year period. David Cooper and George Subotzky, *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998* (Cape Town: Education Policy Unit University of Western Cape, 2001).

[9] "Expenditure on Tertiary Education (% of Government Expenditure on Education) - South Africa | Data," accessed November 8, 2019, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TERT.ZS?end=2016&locations=ZA&start=1994. reports a decline from 16.62 of GDP on tertiary education in 1994 to 12.19% in 2015 in South Africa, relative to a world average of 21.3% in 2014.

[10] Chikane, *Breaking A Rainbow, Building a Nation:* iii.

institutions, including Wits, the protests challenged a long-standing self-image of universities as socially benevolent, politically progressive institutions. This moment of change is a useful prompt for reflecting on how these perceptions emerged historically. This thesis explores how some previous norms of public engagement and protest were established at Wits University. It argues that these norms are the consequence of a colonial modernity that has persisted through the University's various transitions.

This thesis attempts to write a history of publicness at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg through four formative moments in the University's history. Publicness as a concept refers both to what is imagined and projected about the University, as well as actions which influence perceptions of the institution. These case studies explore moments where the University, or constituencies within the University, were involved in different forms of public engagement. The moments illustrate some of the ways that the University's public role has been imagined and enacted. The four examples included in this study are: debates in the 1910s and 1920s about the establishment of Wits as a university; the contested admission of Black staff and students in the 1930s and 1940s; protests against the Extension of University Education Act, 1959 that continued into the 1970s; and the academic interventions of Wits' History Workshop from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. These choices represent specific moments where different groups within the Wits community took action towards shaping the perceived public roles and responsibilities of the University.

Recognising the limits of speaking about 'the university' as a unified entity, with a homogenous set of attitudes, actions and opinions, is essential to this research. There are occasions when the University attempts to act, or to be seen to act, in unison, but in reality, it is an institution comprised of many different departments, disciplines, societies and individuals. Wits' Vice-

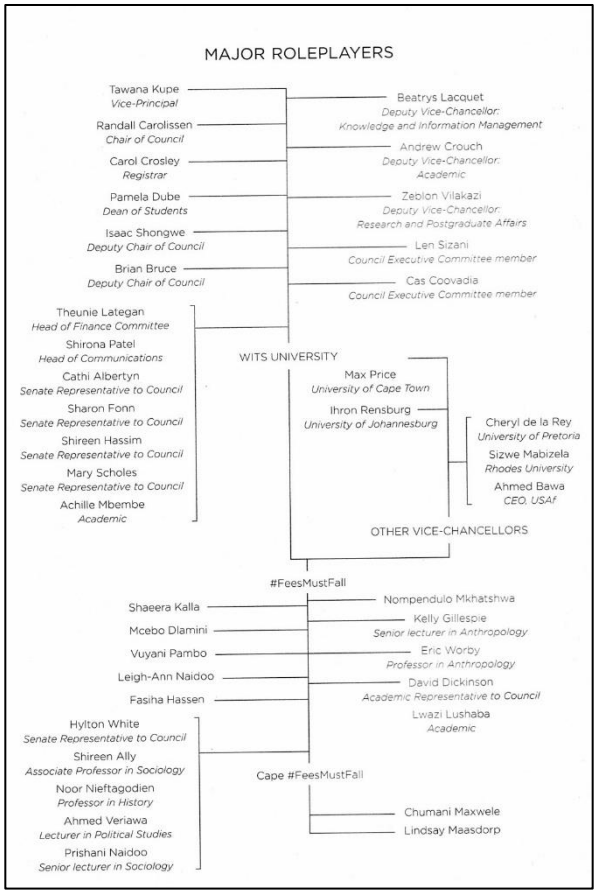

Image 2: Organogram illustrating different groups of major role players, mostly at Wits, that were part of the FeesMustFall protests

Chancellor Adam Habib's preface to *Rebels and Rage* (2019) goes as far as to illustrate some of the core groups within Wits in a branched-organogram (Image 2).[11] Similar definitional challenges exist in trying to describe who constitutes "the public" implied in 'public' institutions.[12] These challenges highlight the tension created between everyday language and the conceptual origins of certain terms; and the potential for this tension to complicate our ability to scrutinise the role of institutions like universities in society.

This thesis views the public roles of universities as constructed and collectively imagined by a range of actors inside and outside the institutions. Both discourse and action inform this collective imagining. This discourse and action exist within a dialectical relationship between the University, or sections of it, and the various communities that engage with or are engaged by the University. These multi-layered relationships are productive in the sense that they create particular types of public relationships, but they are also reactive, in that they respond to the past and the social context. The four moments that this thesis highlights represent occasions where responses to public demands resulted in an identifiable action. By analysing these pivotal periods in the University's history, this thesis explores how the discourses of public responsibilities of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg were shaped between 1922 and 1994.

To best understand what shaped these discourses, each chapter in this thesis explores three questions. They are:

[11] Adam Habib, *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on #feesmustfall* (Jeppestown, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2019), xvii. See Image 2.
[12] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

1) What publics have different constituencies within Wits University imagined themselves as addressing and interacting with?
2) Who has made demands of or publicly expressed their expectations of Wits University?
3) How have different voices at Wits been amplified and silenced?

Publicness, in this thesis, is a concept produced by multidimensional processes, which include relationships, discourse and action, amongst a range of players. Sometimes these players are individuals; sometimes, they are groups. While this thesis primarily explores Wits' publicness through the experiences and interactions of the University's internal constituencies, from its establishment, Wits has been a product of external public influence. These include the demand for the creation of a University, the influence of national organisations like the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), as well as the legal and political environment created by government decision which Wits responded to in various ways. Wits' publicness is constituted through layered interactions between internal and external actors. These include significant individuals such as the vice-chancellors (and principals, before 1948) and prominent academics who represented the University in their disciplines. They also include student organisations, like the Wits' Student Representative Council, and various academic and administrative entities such as the University Council and the Wits History Workshop. Over the period under investigation, numerous discussions, debates and speeches conjured up multiple idealised images of the University. Discourse and rhetoric, as well as occasions when this discourse translated into action or practice, shaped contemporary ideas about the public and social role of the University. These discourses and actions, in turn, have an impact on future thinking, imagination, speech and practice of and by the University.

ii. Literature Review

This thesis is interested in Wits University's development as an institution in the public life of South Africa. It is, therefore, necessary to locate this work both within the historiography of university histories and the theoretical development of concepts related to 'the public'. This

literature review provides a brief overview of the main trends in writing university histories, as well as a theoretical framework for understanding the publicness of universities.

As a starting point, this thesis uses a definition of a university offered by Alejandra Boni and Melanie Walker in their edited collection *Human Development: Re-imagining the University of the Twenty-First Century* (2013). Based on the literature they surveyed, Walker and Boni propose a definition of universities as places where critical knowledge is created, and where contributions to social equality and democratic life are possible and desirable.[13] Boni and Walker's definition captures an intellectual ideal of universities, without prescribing a specific institutional form. A more technical definition of a university, provided by the legal understanding of the institution, includes its ability to award degrees.[14]

The impulse towards "democratic life" and "social equality" helps to contextualise the value of university histories to those concerned with public culture and collective life. Universities around the world still only interact with a small proportion of their local or national communities. In South Africa, public universities represent the largest proportion of Higher Education Institutions in the country, but are extremely elite given the small proportion of the South African population who attend university. Despite the accessibility that the label of 'public' implies,[15] universities are not equally accessible to all citizens, and many societies appear to accept the exclusivity of universities. This 'exclusive-publicness' is an interesting departure point for exploring contemporary concepts of public and social responsibility. This thesis explores both tangible and intangible practices that have governed Wit University's publicness over the last century.

The study of university histories is a well-established sub-discipline within historical studies. Four broad styles of writing about universities can be discerned. They are: commissioned or official university histories; works which provide critical analysis of the idea and form of the university,

[13] Melanie Walker and Alejandra Boni, "Higher education and human development: Towards the public and social good," in *Human Development and Capabilities: Re-imagining the university of the twenty-first century.*, ed. Alejandra Boni and Melanie Walker (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 15.
[14] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities" (Pretoria: Govt. Printer, 1974).
[15] Statistics South Africa, *Education Series. Volume V, Volume V,* 2019, ix. Here, I want to imply both the label of the word, ascribed in legislation, as well as the kind of accessibility that is implied in the notion of public invoked in the general setting, which the Economics uses to define a public good.

predominantly in a Western context; critical university histories outside of the West; and memoirs of (usually well-known) university students and staff. This literature review will discuss each style and its contribution to shaping this thesis.

1. Commissioned Institutional Histories

Officially commissioned institutional histories are the most common type of university histories. Often written by academics associated with the institution in question, these histories are usually commissioned to celebrate an anniversary or a milestone. In this context, they often carry a celebratory or glamorising tone, which limits their use in critically analysing the institution or its social roles. Rebecca Swartz, in her 2011 Masters' thesis on the history of the South African College, argues that these (usually chronological) celebratory accounts present the internal and organisational logics of these institutions as ahistorical and removed from social context. In doing so, they limit the relevance of university histories to scholars of a particular location.[16] Wits University has three notable institutional histories: Bruce Murray's *Wits: The Early Years* (1982) and *Wits: The Open Years* (1997); and a multi-authored work, *The Golden Jubilee of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1972* (1972).[17] Of Murray's two volumes, *Wits: The Early Years,* commissioned in 1978 by the University Council for the University's 60th anniversary*,* provides the most detailed narrative of the University's history, organised by faculty and departments from the origins of the University at the South African School of Mines to the beginning of World War II in 1939. Comparatively, *Wits: The Open Years,* published for the University's 75th anniversary, is more politically focused than *The Early Years*. However, while Murray is at pains to point out that "Wits's [sic] status as an 'open' and 'liberal' university was never uncomplicated"[18], the work has an overall celebratory tone. This is achieved firstly by highlighting Wits' contributions to the creation of a new South Africa, and secondly, by positioning Wits as an institution, which despite its flaws was well ahead of the majority of white South Africans in

[16] Rebecca Swartz, "'Good Citizens and Gentlemen': Public and Private Space at the South African College, 1880-1918" (University of Cape Town, 2011), 7.
[17] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*, (Johannesburg: Jubilee Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand, 1972).
[18] Bruce Murray, *Wits The 'Open' Years* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997). xi.

valuing Black education.[19] Murray's second volume picks up where *The Early Years* ends, covering the demographic and socio-political shifts which took place at Wits from the start of the Second World War until the implementation of the Extension of University Education Act, 1959. Commenting in 1998, David Welsh described Murray's histories as enabling readers to see the university as an institution acting as a "[prism] providing a focus for the developments in the wider society."[20] While Murray's volumes *do* locate Wits' development in the politics and geography of broader society, they still ultimately fit Sheldon Rothblatt's description of traditional institutional histories that are "relatively straightforward, impressively detailed … descriptions of university growth in terms of faculties, facilities, curricula and numbers of students, with additional miscellaneous information."[21] The *Golden Jubilee* booklet published by the University's Jubilee committee in 1948, reads like a snapshot of University highlights, detailing brief histories of different university societies; biographies of the University's principals; and research achievements over the institution's first 50 years. By comparison, Murray's volumes stand out for their effort to provide a detailed, nuanced and chronological history of the University.

By the start of the twenty-first century, the international field of university histories had grown beyond a focus on the narrative or descriptive 'facts-and-rulers' history of individual institutions.[22] The field recognised the value of universities as sites of complex social and intellectual production, with both local and global influence.[23] This development opened up the scope of topics university historians engaged with to include a diverse range of institutional characteristics. These include; studies on student activism, gendered analyses of universities, the spatial and architectural design of universities, the purpose of university education as well as the role of religion in education. The shift towards a more nuanced understanding of universities'

[19] Howard Phillips, "Review Article What Did Your University Do during Apartheid?" 26 (2000): 174, https://doi.org/10.1080/030570700108441.
[20] D Welsh, "Wits under the Microscope," *English Academic Review* 15, no. 1 (1998): 185.
[21] Sheldon Rothblatt, *The revolution of the dons.* (New York: Basic Books, 1968),17, cited in Bronwyn Louise Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)" (University of Pretoria, 2013), 12.
[22] Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)," 12.
[23] Ringer, F.K. "Problems in the history of higher education: a review article.", 239, cited in Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)", 13.

roles as social, political and economic institutions enables the work of university historians to contribute to a much wider field of literature including development studies, politics, education and higher education policy.

This more critical approach to writing university histories has been relatively slow in terms of uptake among South African university historians. However, authors such as Howard Phillips, Bruce Murray and Paul Maylam, have made significant contributions towards this change in the South African literature. According to Strydom's 2013 review of South African university histories, "although almost every university has some form of published 'history', most of these fall into the 'traditional' commemorative genre with only a few notable exceptions."[24] Strydom's literature review notes Howard Phillips' *The University of Cape Town, 1918-1948* and Bruce Murray's two *Wits* volumes as "benchmark texts" for the field in South Africa. Paul Maylam's *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History (2017)* continues this trend, by encouraging readers to think of universities as spaces of intellectual, political and cultural production, rather than only places where graduates receive degrees. Howard Phillips (2000) observes that despite the segregated and fractured history of South African higher education, universities are not, and never have been 'ivory towers' removed from the political and social context of South African society.[25] This is as true for Wits, as it is for the Afrikaans-speaking universities that embraced Afrikaner nationalist ideologies and the so-called 'bush' colleges established by the Apartheid state. This thesis aims to follow in this vein of thinking about universities in terms of their relationship to society beyond campus boundaries.

The relationship between the university and the state is a common theme of analysis within university histories.[26] Given that Wits has received state funding since its establishment, this

[24] *Ad Destinatum. Gedenkboek van die Universiteit van Pretoria* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1960)*; Stellenbosch 1866-1966: honderd jaar hoër onderwyse*. H.B. Thom (ed) (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1966); Edgard H Brookes, *A history of the University of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press, 1966); Maurice Boucher, *The University of the Cape of Good Hope and the University of South Africa, 1873-1946. A study in national and imperial perspective* (Pretoria: Govt Printer, 1974)*;* Universiteit van die Vrystaat *Van sink tot sandsteen tot granite: die erste 100 jare van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat* (Bloemfontein: Universiteit van die Vrystaat, 2006) and E. Brink, *The University of Johannesburg. The university for a new generation* (Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg, 2010) cited in Bronwyn Louise Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)" (University of Pretoria, 2013), 18.

[25] Phillips, "Review Article What did your University do during Apartheid?", 1.

[26] Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)", 14.

relationship has formed an essential part of the University's publicness. While chapters two to five examine the relationship between Wits and the state, this thesis has also tried to understand Wits' institutional identity using a broader concept of 'the public'. To this end, the relationships between Wits and various media, industry interests and political actors are also explored.

Another trend in university histories is to focus on individuals or successions of individuals in a particular office of the university.[27] This thesis uses memoirs of prominent former students, academics and university leaders, and draws on multiple narratives that allow new insights into the Wits University experience to emerge. One inspiring example which engages with under-represented experiences at Wits is *The Wits Wonderwoman Book: Buttons and Breakfasts* (2006) edited by Wendy Orr, Mary Rorich and Finula Dowling. The book is a compilation of poems, photographs and essays by women who participated in the Wits WonderWomen Project to "[capture] an alternative set of stories – the stories of a university that are not always heard." [28] Given the fact that universities' institutional archives are afflicted with many of the same racial, gendered and class biases of their museum or government counterparts, new approaches to writing university histories will need to think creatively about how various narratives and experiences are woven together.

The memoirs that have played a central role in this thesis are: G.R. Bozzoli's *A Vice-Chancellor Remembers* (1997)*;* Mervyn Shear's *Wits: A University in the Apartheid Era* (1996), which was commissioned by the University Council at the end of his terms as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Students; Phillip Tobias's *Into the Past* (2005); and Glenn Moss's *The New Radicals: A Generational Memoir of the 1970s* (2014). These memoirs are a very different type of source to Murray's more formal, academic institutional histories. They provide some subjective reflections on periods covered by this thesis as well as an outline of key events in the University's history post-1959. These narratives also highlight the influence of individuals within an institutional context. They remind readers that the work of 'the university', often seen as homogenous, is impacted on by choices and actions of individuals with relationships and experiences outside of

[27] Ibid.14

[28] Margaret Orr, Mary Rorich, and Finuala Dowling, eds., *Buttons and Breakfasts: The Wits Wonderwoman Book* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006), 1.

the university. Shortly before this thesis was submitted, Wits' current Vice-Chancellor, Adam Habib published *Rebels and Rage* (2019). This book focuses on Habib's experiences of the protests at Wits between 2015 and 2017. The preface of *Rebels and Rage* is a helpful articulation of University management's current views on access and quality. The explicitly subjective nature of this genre promotes critical awareness of how authors' writing have the dual function of recording events and creating a 'feel' for the institution through the voice of the author.

Institutional biographies and personal memoirs are genres that are products of Wits University on multiple levels. Firstly, they are authored by alumni and academics of the University - themselves 'products' of Wits' academic system. Secondly, the authors' reflections about the university are, to a degree, shaped by dominant narratives and imaginings of the role of universities which circulated at Wits during their tenure. Their writing both produces and reproduces the idea of 'the university', generally, and 'the University of the Witwatersrand' specifically.

Academic writing by staff and students across a range of disciplines also contributes to the (re)production of ideas about the University. This thesis has focused on works in the field of Higher Education studies or other Social Sciences which look at the university as a site of social action. Examples of these range from chapters written by vice-chancellors like Guerino R. Bozzoli[29] and Adam Habib,[30] members of academic departments in Education,[31] Sociology[32] or Public Policy,[33] to those written by post-graduate students such as Elizabeth Louw,[34] Bernadette

[29] G.R., Bozzoli, "The role of English Universities in South Africa" in H.W. van der Merwe and David Welsh, eds., *The Future of the University in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: David Phillips, 1977), 188–95.
[30] Adam Habib, "Transcending the Past and Reimagining the Future of the South African University," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42, no. 1 (2016).
[31] A.P., Hunter. "The role of expatriate staff in the Third World University" in van der Merwe & Welsh, *eds*, *The Future of the University in Southern Africa,* xi and 92-101.
[32] Perceptions of Wits Group, *Tomorrow Begins at Wits Today: The Role of the University in a Changing South Africa* (Johannesburg: Perception of Wits, 1986).
[33] *Fees Must Fall : Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016).
[34] Elizabeth Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa" (University of Witwatersrand, 2014).

J. Johnson[35] and Rekgotsofetse Chikane.[36] These works contribute both a descriptive and theoretical analysis of the writers' university experiences of the political and social role of universities in society. Texts like these are significant for thinking about how members of the academic community use formal academic networks of circulation to shape the public expectations of universities.

2. Critical Histories of the University

Globally, universities are usually recognised as performing three primary functions: teaching, research and service.[37] The history of these functions differs according to particular university systems influencing specific institutions. The majority of comparative studies concerned with the development of modern university institutions tend to focus on British, German and American institutions. This emphasis is grounded in the fact that, despite older traditions of higher education and specialist training around the world, most notably in Asia and North Africa, the medieval European university in most cases still serves as the primary model for institutions recognised as universities today. While the university histories enable us, on the one hand, to identify the continuities in university practices and institutional forms, they also allow scholars to trace changes over time. The historicisation of the intellectual underpinnings of different university systems has generated a wide range of interests in "the idea of the university."[38]

Authors interested in the development of "the idea"[39] of the university use history as a tool to identify how the functions of universities have developed over the last eight hundred years. Key

[35] Bernadette Johnson, "Towards Post-Managerialism in Higher Education: The Case Study of Management Change at the University of The Witwatersrand 1999-2004" (University of Witwatersrand, 2006).
[36] Gillian Godsell and Rekgotsofetse Chikane, "The Roots of the Revolution," in *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa*, ed. Ayabonga Nase et al. (Wits University Press, 2016), 54–73, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/fees-must-fall/roots-of-the-revolution/F7725DA51DD4AB112AD61AE489D14F93.
[37] Alfonso Borrero Cabal, "The University as institution today: topics for reflections" (paper presented at the UNESCO/NGO Collective Consultation on Higher Education, 2nd, Paris, 1991), 20.
[38] Michael J. Hofstetter, *The Romantic Idea of a University: England and Germany, 1770-1850* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996); Alfonso Borrero Cabal, "The University as Institution Today: Topics for Reflections," 1991; *Decolonizing the Westernized University : Interventions in Philosophy of Education from within and Without* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016).
[39] Kant's notion of "an idea as a model of perfection, based not on present experience, but on anticipated perfection," is most useful in understanding this category of the literature. Hofstetter, *The Romantic Idea of a University: England and Germany, 1770-1850*, 26.

texts in this literature that this thesis has drawn on are *The Romantic Idea of the University (2001), The University as an Institution Today* (1993) and *The University in Ruins* (1996). Although this thesis does not have space to detail the historical development of the idea of the university at a global scale, it is necessary to understand where early South African universities fit into the global landscape of higher education. Bronwyn Strydom accurately situates the establishment of universities in South Africa at the end of a century and a half of radical change in the idea of European universities.[40] According to Michael J. Hofstetter by the middle of the nineteenth century, "the Confessional University" in Europe had transitioned to "the Romantic University" in England and Germany. Given the colonial links between England and what would become South Africa, the move towards the Romantic idea of the university helps contextualise how the founders of institutions like the South African College and the South African School of Mines (which later became UCT and Wits) thought about the role of university education. Although British and Scottish Universities exerted the strongest influence on South African institutions in terms of curriculum, examinations and academic networks, German influence is also evident. The transformation of German higher education at what became the University of Berlin, led by Wilhelm von Humboldt, promoted the idea of universities as institutions which could find the balance between pure intellectual inquiry and the developmental needs of society. Humboldt promoted collaboration between individual intellectual endeavours and needs of the newly emerging organisational form of the nation-state, mainly through an emphasis on scientific research. For Johann Fichte, an early Romantic-academic at the German University of Jena, "the University exists not to teach information but to inculcate the exercise of critical judgement."[41] This impulse towards European university education as practically useful and widely accessible underlines the significance of university histories in the formulation of ideas about collective life and social responsibility.

As discussed, this thesis conceptualises 'the public' outside of the state/civilian binary by recognising that the publics that engage with the university are constituted by a diverse range of

[40] Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919),"2.
[41] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 6.

communities.[42] A crucial conceptual chanellenge created by the move away from binary notions of public and private, relates to the temporally and geographically unstable nature of a 'public' in the Warnerian sense. While publics are constituted through address and the circulation of texts, they do not only exist in the moment or place where address happens. Publics which overlap with pre-existing communities (of race, location, profession, religion ecetra) are also able to invite (or demand) address and engagement from institutions in society. Understanding publicness as a multi-faceted element of the collective life of institutions (like universities) provides insight into how they operate in context, but these contextually specific definitions require effort to find new links and connections based on empirical experiences. Craig Calhoun's work about the contested nature of university education as a public (economic) good provides a useful framework for a potentially vacuous concept. Two central concepts underpin Calhoun's understanding of publicness; access and benefit. Calhoun distils the notion of the university as a public good through the following four questions, informed by an essentially economic understanding of education:

(1) Where does the money come from?
(2) Who governs?
(3) Who benefits?
(4) How is knowledge produced and circulated?

An economic analysis is helpful in that it allows scholars to understand university outputs as both public assets as well as a private good with comparable values.[43] It also centres one of the primary assumptions behind why some universities, despite their exclusivity, are thought of as public, and whether the increasing role of non-state (private) funds in keeping ostensibly public institutions financially viable, might change these expectations.

Of Calhoun's four questions, the last three are given the most attention in this study. This is due to the space constraints of a Master's and the source materials that I relied on, which include brief and irregular references to finances. University financing is an important consideration of

[42] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 70.
[43] Craig Calhoun, "The University and the Public Good," *Thesis Eleven* 84 (2006), 11. These private goods take the form of tax-exemptions for investors and labour market advantages for graduates and academics.

universities' publicness, particularly given the South African state's commitments to the progressive realisation of free higher education.[44] A focused economic history of Wits is one clear area for potential future research.

3. The University outside of the West

The hegemonic role of European models in the global university system has influenced the institutional structure, academic language and examination in countries across the world. This is particularly true for the British university system, given the extensive reach of British colonial influence in North America, Africa and Asia. In 1994, Bill Readings noted the dominance of English- speaking, Western institutions in conversations that attempt to analyse ideas about 'the university' in a global or international sense critically.[45] Today, while this dominance may be more contested, its spectre lingers in South African imaginations of the university.[46] Given this reality, it is increasingly important for scholars interested in understanding global trends in higher education to engage with literature emerging from the Global South. The 1989 collection *From Dependency to Autonomy: The Development of Asian Universities* explores case studies of ten Asian and South-East Asian university-systems. A key takeaway from this work is that Western hegemony in the global university system is not limited to former colonies, although states that were not colonised seem to exercise a higher degree of agency in terms of which elements of the Western institutional form they adopt.[47]

Despite the unparalleled influence of the West on global understandings of what people think of as 'the university', contributions from authors of the Global South provide practical examples of why there is no single or universal idea of the university. Historical factors, such the prevalence of direct or indirect rule, the timing of independence, pre-existing cultures of literacy, education and religion, as well as the nature of post-colonial government, all influence how particular

[44] Malcolm Ray, *Free Fall: Why South African Universities Are in a Race Against Time* (Johannesburg: Bookstorm, 2016), 343.
[45] Readings, *The University in Ruins*. 3. Mahmood Mamdani, "The African University," *London Review of Books*, July 19, 2018, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v40/n14/mahmood-mamdani/the-african-university.
[46] Cheryl de le Ray, "The Changing Idea of a University," *The Journal of the Helen Suzman Foundation*, no. 76 (September 2015), 6.
[47] Tim Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

universities have adapted one (or multiple) European institutional styles and traditions to their local context. What is also clear is that the link between formal education and development or progress, described in Hofstetter's *The Romantic Idea of the University,*[48] has been more contested in some former colonial systems than in the West where institutions developed with closer relationships to local socio-cultural contexts.[49]

It is not surprising that European-style universities in Africa have a different, usually much shorter, history to their European counterparts. One difference, which P. T. Zeleza identifies, is that African universities, even in the post-colonial moment, tended to emerge from centres that initially focused on developing one specific skill or industry. These centres prioritised the colonial economy rather than being motivated by the pursuit of intellectual or spiritual inquiry or scientific development.[50] The geographic bias towards the West as the centre of academic excellence and intellectual innovation, which is still evident in most international academic publics, is in part a legacy of this history of Western agenda-setting. Works such as the edited collection *Decolonizing the Westernized University: Interventions in philosophy of education from within and without,*[51] *Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922-2000*[52] and *Towards an African Identity of Higher Education*[53] are just three more examples from different parts of the Global South that address the Western bias in global education power dynamics. These works take seriously the need to evaluate established norms in order to imagine new possibilities for international academic publics critically. While this thesis does not propose solutions for imagining a decolonial university, by historicizing the public imaginations of and by Wits it hopes to serve as a platform for informed and honest engagement about the role of the University going forward.

[48] Hofstetter, *The Romantic Idea of a University: England and Germany, 1770-1850*, 21.
[49] W. Rodney, (1974), *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington DC: Howard University Press), 95. Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age : Reframing Decolonisation and Development*, 3.
[50] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Transnational Education and African Universities," *Journal of Higher Education in Africa / Revue de l'enseignement Supérieur En Afrique* 3, no. 1 (2005), 11.
[51] *Decolonizing the Westernized University : Interventions in Philosophy of Education from within and Without*.
[52] Carol Sicherman, *Becoming an African University: Makerere, 1922-2000* (Trenton, NJ ; Africa World Press, 2005).
[53] *Towards an African Identity of Higher Education* (Pretoria: Vista University and Skotaville Media, 2004).

Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins* (1997) argues convincingly for the historical role of the university as a shaper of national identity and civic culture from the nineteenth century up to the 1990s, focusing on Western institutions in particular.[54] The relationship between universities and the nation-state that Readings observes in Europe and America differs historically to that of nationalist/post-Independent ideology in formerly colonised countries. Works like *Nigeria's University Age,*[55] *From Dependency to Autonomy,*[56] and *Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922 to 2000*[57] show that universities were important educational spaces for key anti-colonial, Nationalist leaders but that the political cultures that emerged from universities with these colonial roots, tended to perpetuate a Eurocentric idea of statehood.[58] The institutional emulation of Western models of the nation-state helped assert newly-independent countries' credibility in an international system dominated by former colonial powers in the independence era.[59] However, the tendency of universities to function as sites of social and economic capital reproduction also brought them under suspicion by anti-colonial activists who viewed the associations between universities and former colonial powers as counter-revolutionary for the creation of an independent state.[60] Frans Fanon's critique of a black, nationalist bourgeois in chapter three of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is perhaps the most succinct analysis of the limitations of colonial systems in pointing to a decolonial society.[61]

Readings' book is, however, primarily concerned with the rise of what he terms "the university of excellence" which displaces the *raison d'etre* of the modern, Western university.[62] Readings characterises this "university of excellence" as represented by the professionalisation of administrative and corporate managerial models which has diminished the prestige of the

[54] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 3.
[55] Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development*.
[56] P. G. Altbach & V. Selvaratnam, *eds.From Dependence to Autonomy: The Development of Asian Universities* (Dordretch, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).
[57] Sicherman, *Becoming an African university: Makerere, 1922-2000*.
[58] Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development*. 98.
[59] Cabal, A. B. *The University as an Institution Today: Topics for Reflection*. (Paris; UNESCO, 1993) 22
[60] Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development*. 102.
[61] Achille Joseph Mbembe, "Decolonizing the University: New Directions," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 34.
[62] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 19.

academic as teacher and researcher.[63] While the perceived tensions between the university as a site of professional training versus intellectual inquiry can be traced back to the 1700s, Readings' argued that Americanisation or Globalisation created a new organising logic for the university and fundamentally changed the relationship between the nation-state, trained professionals and academic research.[64] This trend in global higher education also referred to as the neoliberalisation of universities, is also evident in South African universities, particularly those who identify as research-intensive, like Wits.[65] Cabal and Zeleza argue that African universities have higher social expectations on their service function than Western counterparts because of more social need for poverty reduction. [66] In the context of decreasing state subsidies and the increasing trend towards competitiveness based on quantifiable measures of success, African universities like Wits face an apparent tension between what it means to be locally relevant and internationally competitive. This emphasis on quantifiable metrics of university achievements is part of the transition towards Readings' "university of excellence."[67] Wits University tries to resolve this tension by recognising "the intensity of knowledge as an input to production" in local development.[68] Works like Achille Mbembe's *Decolonizing the University: New Directions,*[69] written twenty years after *The University in Ruins,* is a good indicator that, while these trends might exist within the global system, the speed and articulation of these transitions vary across social, economic and institutional contexts.

Bill Readings argues further that the image of the modern Western university as "a model of the rational community, a microcosm of the pure form of the public sphere" is in decline.[70] While the real-life applicability of this model is debatable, Readings' observation provides a bridge between the study of universities as institutions, and the idea of the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas

[63] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 8.
[64] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 11.
[65] Habib, *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on #feesmustfall*, ix.
[66] Cabal, "The University as Institution Today: Topics for Reflections," 27.
[67] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 11.
[68] University of the Witwatersrand, "Wits Vision 2022 Strategic Framework," 2010, 7, https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/footer/about-wits/governance/documents/Wits%20Vision%202022%20Strategic%20Framework.pdf. Date Accessed: 17/01/2016.
[69] Mbembe, "Decolonizing the University: New Directions."
[70] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 20.

originally used the concept of the public sphere to describe an eighteenth-century European, educated bourgeois who debated and discussed matters of social import. He argued that by sharing and circulating their opinions, this bourgeois promoted informed engagement between (an elite) civil society, the state and the economy. Habermas's concept of *Öffentlichkeit* (translation: "the public sphere") makes two significant contributions to today's theories of publics and the public sphere. Firstly, it provided a structured framework for thinking about the circulation of opinion beyond the domestic space. Secondly, although limited in his imagination of who could participate in the public sphere, he centred the question of how people whose voices matter to collective social life articulate and share their opinions in an ongoing but asynchronous way. This thesis is interested in two main lines of questioning that have developed out of Habermas' public sphere theory. First, who are the people whose voices matter? Secondly, where is the public sphere located?

4. Publics and Publicness

This thesis' interests in the imagined public roles of Wits University draws on theories of the social imaginary and the public sphere as a framework for analysing the practices associated with the concept of publicness. Sudipta Kaviraj defines the public as "a particular configuration of commonness that emerged in the capitalist-democratic West in the eighteenth century."[71] Kaviraj also describes a "social concept" as "a routine repetitiveness when people carry on their everyday interpretation of the world."[72] Similarly, Charles Taylor uses the idea of "social imaginary" to describe an unspoken agreement about collective living under Western modernity. In essence, Taylor defines the social imaginary as "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy."[73] Taylor is concerned with wide-reaching social constructions or collective imagining that happens in the public sphere, economy and civil society because they govern how "serious conflicts and mobilisations happen."[74] While both Kaviraj and Taylor are more concerned with collective life at a grand

[71] Sudipta Kaviraj, "Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta," *Public Culture* 10, no. 1 (1997): 86, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-10-1-83.
[72] Kaviraj, 86.
[73] Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 91.
[74] Kaviraj, "Filth and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices about Space in Calcutta," 83.

societal scale, their work enables one to draw parallels to how implicit agreements on smaller scales influence collective life. This thesis contributes to the literature which argues for the university as an influential institution in this abstract imagining of collective life. Universities usually have clearly defined physical boundaries and tangible materiality; however, they are also associated with a variety of abstract, collectively imagined, socially-constructed ideas. This thesis traces how different discourses and action (also inaction) related to Wits have shaped what is imagined as possible and desirable (or not) for public universities in South Africa.[75]

Today, the idea of 'the public sphere' is often applied to a discursive public, associated with democratic principles that promote public participation in decision making. This participation is intended to give people a role in shaping their government's actions and policies. Geoff Eley, in a 2002 special edition of *Positions*, noted that "the public sphere" has been valuable in thinking through ideas about citizenship and "democratic legitimisation."[76] This link to notions of citizenship and democratic legitimisation provides a helpful context for Readings argument of the university and the nation-state as two foundational institutions of modernity.

Nancy Fraser in her work on *Rethinking the Public Sphere* (1990) and *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere* (2010) helps to expand Habermas' elite notion of the public sphere, developing a concept which is compatible with more inclusive liberal-democratic systems. She recognises that technology and the media have increased both the speed and quantity of information circulating between people. The multitude of opinions, ideas and modes of communication contribute to what Fraser identifies as "counterpublics" - a space which simultaneously withdraws from mainstream public opinion and agitates against its positions.[77] Fraser's three major contributions help to bridge the gap between theory and experiences of the public sphere.

The nineteenth-century expansion of voting rights required a structural re-adjustment of the American public sphere. Woodruff Smith (2001) describes a shift from a public sphere dominated

[75] Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," 106. Recognises that social imaginaries depend on both what is "factual and "normative" ; that is, we have a sense of how things usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go, of what missteps would invalidate the practice."
[76] Geoff Eley, "Politics, Culture, and the Public Sphere," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10, no. 1 (2002): 224.
[77] Nancy Fraser, "Transnational Public Sphere: Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World," *2007* 24, no. 4 (2007): 67.

by an educated, journal-reading elite to one that included a growing middle-class.[78] Smith argues that this shift produced a two-tier public sphere which consisted of "an inner, intellectually exclusive sphere …, surrounded by a larger outer sphere that levied a less onerous tax on the mental and educational capacities of its readers. The latter received issues, positions, and intellectual consensus (when it existed) from the former."[79] This split is useful as a conceptual tool for thinking about the elite public spaces, such as Wits.

A second theoretical question which public sphere theory poses for publicness is one of location. It is tempting to think of 'the public sphere' as a series of spaces or objects designated as 'public' that one can physically enter or exit. However, Charles Taylor has argued that the public sphere is often not a fixed, physical space,[80] but can be any "common space in which the members of society…discuss matters of common interest and thus can form a common mind."[81] Carolyn Hamilton and Lesley Cowling (forthcoming) have built on Taylor's conception of the public sphere as social imaginary to lift the concept out of its everyday usage. This enables a more fluid and intangible understanding of what the public sphere is and weakens the power of 'publicness' embedded in formalised institutions, forums and debates.[82] Through this active participation, institutions that make up the core public sphere tend to have more agenda-setting or convening power than those outside the core.

iii. Sources

The theoretical literature and university histories discussed above have been central in shaping the arguments put forward in this thesis. Newspaper clippings were used to access some of the opinions and debate circulating in public discussion at the time they were published. Newspapers, while useful mirrors of widely circulated public opinions, are also bounded in several ways. The boundaries include language and literacy, as well as editorial choices and

[78] Woodruff Smith, *Public Universities and the Public Sphere* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 60.
[79] Smith, 59–60.
[80] Rather he refers to a "topical common space" Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," 113. While Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 51. He notes that "the strangeness of this kind of public is often hidden from view because the assumptions that enable the bourgeois public sphere allow us to think of a discourse public as a people and, therefore, as an actually existing set of potentially enumerable humans."
[81]Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," 111.
[82]Lesley Cowling and Carolyn Hamilton, eds., "Chapter 1," in *Babel Unbound: Rage, Reason and Rethinking public life.* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2020).

available economic resources of both papers and readers. Different newspapers also represent different readerships and help to identify the potential for multiple, simultaneous forms of public opinion.[83]

This thesis has relied primarily on newspaper clippings from the Central Records Office at the University of the Witwatersrand. The clippings are part of the University's record of itself, through the lens of the media. This record provides a limited range of views, determined primarily through the process of selection and curation of the clippings collection. The selection bias inherent in this kind of collection provides insight into the University's curation and remembering of its institutional record. The absence of information about by whom or how these clippings were compiled and organised, is a useful reminder that institutional histories and 'official' narratives often obscure the decisions and agency of individual actors who collect, curate and record history.

The Rand Daily Mail and *The Star* appear most prominently in these collections.[84] The frequency of these publications in the clippings collection is unsurprising, given their dominant position in Johannesburg's English medium press at the time. The articles clipped for this collection include pieces written both by and about members of the University community, providing a glimpse into the dialectical relationship between town and gown in the Johannesburg.

Clippings from local papers in other provinces such as the *Cape Times, Cape Argus* and the *Natal Mercury* are less frequent, but highlight some of Wits' networks in other parts of the country. Clippings from the Afrikaans press, including *Die Burger* and *Die Volkstem*, are also included. These clippings help demonstrate that, although it is often tempting to conflate the notion of publics with language or ethnic group, circulation of texts did overlap at various points. Notably absent from the Wits' Central Records Archive were references to the University from *The Bantu*

[83] Lesley Cowling, "Framing Essay: The Media and the Production of Public Debate," *Social Dynamics* 36, no. 1 (March 2010): 80.

[84] State Library (South Africa), ed., *A List of South African Newspapers, 1800-1982, with Library Holdings.* (Pretoria: State Library, 1983), 121 & 140. *The Star* was is an English language daily newspaper that published its first edition on 15 September 1936 and was printed by the Central News Agency. The *Rand Daily Mail* was another popular English language daily newspaper which was published between 1902 and 1985, it was printed by the South African Associated Newspapers. Both papers had their offices in Johannesburg towns and were associated with the English-liberal press.

World (later *The World)* and other newspapers targeted at a Black, urban readership such as *Abantu-Banto, Imvo* and *Ilanga*. As one of the few 'open' universities in the country, this perceived lack of public engagement is surprising.[85] Despite this gap, chapter two does reference *The Bantu World* (1935) discussion of Dr B.W. Vilakazi's appointment as a staff member at Wits. These references were sourced through secondary literature, and not the Central Records Office archive or the Wits institutional histories.

The *Wits Student* newspaper, written, edited and published by students, was particularly useful for tracking the issues which captured student interests during various periods. [86] By the 1950s, *Wits Student* was being published monthly. By 1972, its print run had increased to six thousand a week, suggesting that almost every full-time Wits student[87] and two-thirds of registered students[88] read the paper at the time. The Student Representative Council (SRC) at Wits published regular opinions and articles in the *Wits Student* from the 1950s to the early 1980s. This was markedly different from the current Wits student newspaper, *Wits Vuvuzela* launched in 2004 as a project of the Wits' School of Journalism. The *Wits Student* had its own editor*;* however, the SRC often wrote contributions and commentary for the paper. Aside from the activities of the SRC, *Wits Student* included reports about university life such as talks and lectures by notable speakers, sports results, memorial days, theatre reviews and commercial advertisements targeted at students. The opinions and editorials section of the newspaper also developed into a robust platform for political commentary and discussion, with several student-writers going on to become prominent journalists and social theorists.[89] Although mostly supportive of NUSAS positions and activities, it is worth noting that *Wits Student* did occasionally include opinion pieces and articles about other student-political organisation such as the

[85] Rene Lefort, "The 'Black' Press in South Africa," *International Social Science Journal* 33, no. 1 (1981): 109.
[86] Bruce Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997), 337–38. *Wits Student* was the name of the official student newspaper at Wits University from 1948, replacing *WU's Views. Wits Student* was granted a new constitution in 1957/58 which allowed for two editors, appointed by the SRC. Although the newspaper was considered 'largely autonomous' it could not print headlines which went against SRC policies and so the political leanings of the paper shifted according to its editors and the dominant political groups within the SRC.
[87] Glenn Moss, *The New Radicals: A Generational Memoir of the 1970s* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2014), 107.
[88] South African Institute for Race Relations to Author, "Wits Enrolment Figures by Race, 1954-1985," 2019.
[89] Notably these include: Ruth First, Lionel Forman, Hugh Lewin and Harold Wolpe in the 1950s.

Moderate Students Organization (MSO) and the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond (ANS) in the 1970s and 1980s. The *Wits Student* editions referenced in this thesis are predominantly from the Wits Central Records archive where hardcopies and selected digitised copies are available. My search concentrated on the years surrounding the Academic Freedom Campaigns (1954 to 1974) and the Wits History Workshop Open Days (1976 to 1994).

Finally, this study has also drawn on a selection of relevant government policy documents, commissions and Acts related to Higher Education since 1910. While Acts of Parliament, White Papers and policy documents such as the National Development Plan provide insight into government perspectives and official strategy decisions, commissions of enquiries provide valuable additional perspectives. They represent not only the state's positions inter alia through the terms of reference but also input from various stakeholders whom the commissions deemed significant to testify or interested parties who made submissions. South Africa has a long history of commissions of enquiry. The Ware Commission (1903), Holloway Commission (1955) and the Van Wyk De Vries Commission (1974) have been the most significant for this thesis. The Ware Commission (1903) was established to determine the feasibility and desirability of a university in what was then the Transvaal, and the Holloway Commission (1955) investigated the feasibility of racially segregated university institutions. It found counter to the government's wishes, that segregated university education was financially inefficient. The Van Wyk De Vries Commission (1974) investigated the roles of white universities and was extremely critical of the formerly open English universities, which it saw as political trouble makers.

The act of publication is inherently an act of public address. While the sources mentioned above are not an exhaustive list of the material which could benefit a study of Wits' publicness, the publications I chose to include were selected both because of the diversity of their authors and their external address. For example, the minutes of University committee meetings or personal correspondence between academics, government officials and students, may provide more insight into the logic that informed particular acts of public engagement. These documents, although published and accessible through the archives, arguably were created with a much narrower imagined audience than the published books, newspapers and commission and government reports. The view of these sources as actively engaging and addressing an audience

which was not limited to the confines of a particular meeting room or department adds value to their role in understanding notions of publicness in the historical moment that produced them.

iv. Why Wits?

Wits is one of the twenty-six public universities in South Africa, and the approaches used in this thesis could apply to any of them. The choice of Wits as a case study was based primarily on its reputation as a liberal, white university with a strong anti-apartheid public image.[90] This historical reputation was made more interesting by Wits' recent history as a starting point for the October 2015 FeesMustFall movement.[91] Although one of the findings of this thesis criticises the disproportionate influence that Wits has had on the collective imagining of the public roles of South African universities, Wits' public image in relation to ideas of liberal transformation and social change in mainstream South African public discourse makes it a productive choice for the questions this Master's explores. Given the extremely segregated history of higher education in South Africa, this study is not intended to be representative of all current South African institutions, but it does hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the fractured history of South African Higher Education.

Wits was one of the few universities in the country whose core structure was not fundamentally impacted upon by either the university reforms under the Extension of Universities Act (1959) or the institutional mergers which took place under Minister Kadar Asmal in 2004. This continuity makes it possible to study the changes in the discourses around the public role of an urban, white South African university over a long time - not only pre- and post- 1994, but also in the pre-apartheid Union period. Only three other universities: The University of Cape Town, the University of Stellenbosch and the University of South Africa, had independent degree-granting powers before the rise of the National Party government in 1948. Wits' influence as a core member of what is imagined as 'the South African public sphere' both predates and has outlived the Apartheid political regime. The University maintains a prestigious public standing. Part of

[90] Julius Lewin cited in *Welsh, "Wits under the Microscope,"* 185.
[91] Naidoo, "Contemporary Student Politics in South Africa," 183.

what this thesis explores is how this prestige becomes compounded across time and generations of university students and academics.

v. Chapter Outline

The chapters that follow take us from a brief descriptive history of Wits University through four case studies across time of Wits' public engagement: the establishment of the University in the 1920s; attitudes towards Black staff and students in the 1930s and 1940s; the Academic Freedom protests starting in the 1950s; and the Wits History Workshop from its inception in 1976 after the Wits Labour History Conference through to the early 1990s. These four moments in Wits' history stand out as moments of public engagement, where university groups and external actors shaped the perceived public and social roles of the University. Each chapter is interested in trying to identify firstly, who the most significant communities or actors were in these public engagements, and secondly, how the concept of 'public' was deployed in various conversations about and by members of the University. In concluding, the thesis provides an overview of the shifts in how Wits has conceptualised its relationship to public service and how the University has engaged with particular communities.

Chapter 2, "Locating the University'', provides a brief historical overview of the University's establishment and the initial contributions that the new University was expected to make to Johannesburg and the new Union of South Africa. This chapter focuses on the roles and expectations articulated first at a public meeting of the Johannesburg University Movement in 1916 and then through a supplement published by Wits University in *The Rand Daily Mail* titled "Our University." The speakers at the public meeting and the authors of the "Our University" supplement saw Wits as a 'civilising' institution for a predominantly white, male citizenry. The meeting portrayed the University as a critical institution for linking the relatively young city and country with more established and prestigious parts of the British Empire.

Chapter 3, "People on the Periphery of Our Univerisity'', explores Wits' practices in terms of open admissions and employment before University Apartheid became legal. Both the University's Private Act (1921) and various statements by university management made rhetorical commitments to non-racial admissions at Wits. These rhetorical commitments contributed to

one of the most enduring features of Wits' publicness; the image of Wits as a liberal, meritocratic and politically progressive institution. By analysing the actual treatment of Black students and staff at Wits before the passing of the 1959 Extension of Universities Act, this chapter outlines the internal limitations of Wits' approach to racial equality before government intervention. It also examines how the University's interactions and engagements with Black staff and students positioned them as peripheral to the white public that the University imagined itself serving.

Chapter 4, "Wits and the contestations of Academic Freedom in South African", and Chapter 5, "Continuing the conversation on Academic Freedom", provide a description and analysis of the Academic Freedom protests which took place at Wits in the 1950s. These chapters detail the different ways that different constituencies within the Wits community performed protest and approached public engagement. Chapter 4 shows how texts like *The Open Universities of South Africa* booklet, the practice of the General Assembly of the University, and the Academic Freedom March have fundamentally shaped how acceptable university protest has been imagined in the South African context.

Chapter 5 explores how the protests about Academic Freedom produced an increasingly oppositional public image of Wits in the 1960s and early 1970s. It examines the extent to which the passing of the 1959 Extension of University Education Act impacted on Wits' public roles and responsibilities, with a focus on Vice-Chancellor G.R. Bozzoli's participation in the Van Wyk Der Vries Commission of Enquiry into Universities (1974).

Chapter 6, "Dissenting Voices", uses the case study of the Wits History Workshop (WHW), with its focus on popularising History, as a lens through which to better understand how Wits eventually sought to expand its imagined public to include engaging with Black voices. The WHW was started in 1976 and grew significantly into the early-1990s. This chapter follows the development of the Workshop from a small, academic counterpublic to much more mainstream academic unit. This shift happened in a moment where Wits was actively taking steps towards including Black South African communities that it had marginalised until the 1980s. Despite significant gains in developing the scope of both form and content in South African social history,

the WHW reproduced the centring of white, South African publics perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the University.

Chapter 7, “Conclusion”, brings together the common threads that run through each of the four moments explored in the thesis. Specifically, it highlights critical shifts in how the University moved from a tool that hoped to support national development and the practical and moral education of the new South Africa citizenry to an institution with an accumulated sense of self-conscious authority. The development of this self-conscious authority built on the actions and interactions of various groups and individuals whom society read as representing ‘the university’. This elicits varying engagements with different external stakeholders and communities. Through relationships with these stakeholders and communities, Wits University has taken on the oppositional public image grew to prominence the mid-1950s while cementing its role as part of South Africa’s core public sphere through its historical centring of a predominantly English-speaking, white, core public sphere. Finally, the thesis explores some of the implications of Wits’ particular history in the imagination of university roles and responsibilities in the post-Apartheid context.

Chapter 2:

Locating the University

Image 3: An early sketch of Wits University buildings on the Milner Park campus, circa 1921

2. Locating the University

Understanding the discourses that shaped ideas about Wits' public responsibilities between 1922 and 1994, requires us to explore the establishment of the University. This chapter locates Wits' 1922 establishment in the early decades of the Union of South Africa and explores the ideas of colonial modernity, citizenship and education in early Johannesburg and the newly established Union of South Africa. The discourses which governed Wits' eventual establishment as a degree-granting institution were a product of an almost exclusively white, settler-colonial public sphere deeply concerned with creating a sense of colonial modernity in the "turbulent mining town" of Johannesburg.[92] This chapter explores how, despite the racially limited imagination of the University's public discourse, Wits' early years established a basis for its later reputation as a champion of openness.

i. The Prelude to the University, 1903-1922

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits) was officially established in 1922. Founded in 1886, Johannesburg was producing about a quarter of world's gold by 1901 and was the undisputed economic centre of the Union of South Africa. Wits was the fourth university established in what is now the Republic of South Africa, and the first English-medium university in the interior of the country.

Wits' official recognition as a university took several years to achieve. Although the Witwatersrand quickly became the most populated region of the Union, educational facilities were slow to develop. The South African School of Mines, initially located in Kimberley, moved to Johannesburg in 1904 and underwent several transformations before becoming the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.[93] The School of Mines evolved into the Transvaal Technical Institute in 1904, the Transvaal University College, Johannesburg in 1908 and then the South African School of Mines and Technology in 1910. In 1920 it was renamed the University College, Johannesburg, as a constituent college of the University of South Africa. Finally, in 1921 the

[92] Giliomee, H. cited in Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa", 169. Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg" (Johannesburg, March 1916), 8, Wits Central Records.

[93] Bruce Murray, *Wits: The Early Years* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1982), 4.

University College received its royal charter and became the University of the Witwatersrand. Wits started its first academic year in 1922.

The idea of establishing a university in Johannesburg out of the South African School of Mines had been investigated as early as 1903 by the Ware Commission.[94] Its recommendations adopted a fundamentally pragmatic approach and did not seem overly concerned with the intellectual concerns of Kantian reason, or Humboldtian culture that Readings associates with the modern university.[95] As Murray notes, the Ware Commission clearly envisaged that the primary purpose of a future higher education institution would be to cater for industry needs (mainly mining), to generate a regular supply of trained, white labour, to enhance white South African youth's opportunities for professional advancement and to maintain British hegemony in the Transvaal and South Africa more broadly.[96]

The "public meeting of citizens" held at the Johannesburg Town Hall on 17 March 1916,[97] demonstrated that in the first decade of Union, these purposes had expanded. The meeting opposed national government's decision to divert Alfred Beit's £200 000 bequest from the project to establish a university in Johannesburg, towards Cape Town, and "The University Question" more broadly. Although unsuccessful in the short term, the 1916 protest meeting was a "cleverly stage-managed" public event that won important concessions for the eventual establishment of Wits.[98] The meeting's report also provides insight into the perceived value of university education and obstacles that the Johannesburg University Movement faced at the time. Johannesburg's mayor chaired the meeting, and several prominent Johannesburg citizens

[94] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years* , 9.In 1903, the Ware Commission was tasked by the state with compiling a list of recommendations for higher education in the Transvaal.
[95] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 14.
[96] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 15.
[97] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years,* 21. At this point the fledgling Union government had only awarded university Charters to Cape Town and Stellenbosch (both in the Cape Province) and had established the federal University of South Africa, of which University College, Johannesburg was a constituent college. Despite the availability of a bequest by mining magnate, Alfred Beit, and the work of the Witwatersrand Council for Education, parliament refused to commit to recognizing the University College, Johannesburg as an independent institution or provide conditions under which such provisions would be made.
[98] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years,* 55.

who served on the Witwatersrand Council of Education addressed the crowd.[99] 2500 members of the public attended, including mayors of eight towns on the Witwatersrand Gold Reef. Speakers referenced the need for the "life-long study of education" and the desire "to get some justice for the people of Johannesburg."[100]

The meeting resolved to continue applying pressure for a government-funded "state-supported Teaching University" in Johannesburg, to service the growing white population on the Witwatersrand.[101] The meeting argued that Johannesburg deserved the benefits of a local university, in part because of its growing college-age population and, in part out of a sense of unjust treatment by the national government. There was a strong sense that Johannesburg had repeatedly been called on to "pay the piper" on behalf of the Union, without receiving fair recognition and support from the national government.[102] Dr Manfred Nathan described parliament's motion to redirect the Beit bequest as an "attempt to legalise piracy", reflecting a sense of resentment and marginalisation that was evident in many of the speeches at this meeting. This sentiment suggests that by 1916, a link had started to develop between how Johannesburg residents imagined their rights as national citizens and the public nature of university education.

The establishment of a University was a critical and necessary step towards developing a civic culture in Johannesburg able to support a "better" future for the city.[103] Speakers at the meeting argued that a university would develop an educated upper class which could "reform from above"[104] and create an environment where citizens of Johannesburg could compete economically and educationally with the long-established mother city of Cape Town in the

[99] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 14. This council was an initiative of private citizens initially established to improve the quality of elementary schooling in the Witwatersrand, which became progressively interested in the technical training and university education in the 1890s and early 1900s. Many of the representatives of the Council who spoke at this meeting, later served on the first Council of Wits University.
[100] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg," 13. Mr T Reunert, Chairman of the Witwatersrand Council of Education, further likened Johannesburg to "Cinderella of the Union", destined to "remain amongst the dust and the ashes, keeping the pot boiling for our elder sisters" if nothing was done. Ibid., 5.
[101] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 9.
[102] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 9.
[103] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 9.
[104] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 11.

south.[105] The presenters highlighted a future-orientated interest in education for the community: "the city of Johannesburg is going to advance … only by insisting upon having good education for your children."[106] Although the University Movement existed for several years, it did not necessarily have widespread popular support.[107] To this end, speakers at the meeting called on local citizens, business and municipalities to dig deep to support the success of the University.[108] Although the proposed university would predominantly serve the Witwatersrand community, proponents also saw it as a tool to promote the international position of the city.[109] Conceptually, the arguments put forward at this public meeting flag an ideological difference between what a 'university', rather than a 'university college' meant for a city.

When Wits was eventually established, there was little initial change to academic departments and faculties vis-à-vis the University College, indicating that the cultural value associated with a local university seems to have exceeded its academic function. Aside from the high turnout at the 1916 meeting, the sources do not give much insight into the extent which the ordinary Johannesburg citizens were concerned with the issues put forward by the Witwatersrand Education Council. It is clear, however, that Johannesburg's settler-colonial elite, who saw themselves as responsible for building the civic culture of the Johannesburg, valued education. The cultural value they associated with a recognised, degree-awarding university was an essential step towards establishing a civic culture which met the kind of Western modernity that drove white settler-colonialism in South Africa. Support for Wits as an institution which could put Johannesburg on the path to "rehabilitating itself in the eyes of South Africa"[110] coincided with parallel initiatives for civic institutions. Investments by both the Johannesburg city council and British-influenced mining magnates led to the formation of the Johannesburg Art Gallery,

[105] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 10.
[106] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 8.
[107] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 4. An example to this effect is speakers' identifying the need to to convince the large crowd of the "absolute necessity of having a University at Johannesburg."
[108] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 11.
[109] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 4. Particularly in relation to the British Empire and the United States of America.
[110] Comyn Duthie, "Affairs of the Students: How They Are Managed, the SRC.," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.

completed in 1915.[111] The Johannesburg Town Hall, completed in 1916, was another example of the drive for establishing a modern civic culture in Johanessburg. Through these public institutions, the various councils and committees established to represent Johannesburg citizens aspired to show both the rest of South Africa and the world that Johannesburg could "progress from a mining camp to …one of the best-appointed cities in the world."[112] Speakers at the 1916 meeting lamented the fact that Johannesburg had started to lose institutions such as its General Post Office, the Department of Mines and the Headquarters of the South African Railways.[113] To these self-appointed civic leaders, this signalled regression away from the Milner kindergarten's reforms which sought to develop Johannesburg into an important urban centre of the Union.[114]

Mr T. Reunert, Chairman of the Wits Council of Education, identified and challenged three main arguments against the founding of a university in Johannesburg. The first was the perception that the desire for the university's establishment represented "quite a new attitude." Reunert argued that Johannesburg's "interest … in higher education is at least 13 years old", referencing the 1903 Ware Commission and Milner's post-war vision of establishing a scientific university on the Rand.[115] The second challenge targeted the intellectual capacity of Johannesburg citizens. Although Johannesburg had a substantial population, critics argued that "a large population does not necessarily argue great intellect."[116] The implication was that the intellectual project of a university would exceed both the demand and the capabilities of Johannesburg citizens. The third argument against the university movement centred on a perception that Johannesburg was a "city of agitation" not "satisfied unless [its citizens were] getting up to some new agitation every two or three weeks…"[117] Some critics felt that Johannesburg had "an undesirable atmosphere, moral, mental and physical, for young men and maidens to be reared in or exposed to."[118] While

[111]Jillian Carman, *Uplifting the Colonial Philistine: Florence Phillips and the Making of the Johannesburg Art Gallery* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006), 251.
[112] Carman, *Uplifting the Colonial Philistine*, 159.
[113] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg," 13.
[114] Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)", 91.
[115] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 4.
[116] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg," 16.
[117] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 5.
[118] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 5.

Reunert's speech does not explicitly identify these critics, it does reveal the pervasive classist discourses around the value and function of education which circulated in settler-colonial South African society.[119]

Proponents of the University Movement also mobilised the history of political contestation and compromise between English- and Afrikaans- speaking white South Africans to further their cause. Johannesburg, as a cosmopolitan urban centre, was considered much better suited to a "truly national" teaching university than the Cape where "racialism" and classist divisions abounded.[120] Racialism in this context referred to animosity between the "two white races of South Africa" – English- and Afrikaans- speaking white people. [121] Black South Africans were not explicitly mentioned at the 1916 meeting, although the repeated references to "white citizens" and "the white population" imply that speakers were aware of 'other' types of citizens and sought to define their public in racial terms. Although technically 'South African' as a national identity only formally existed after 1910, the idea of a nation of 'civilised', white men at the southern tip of Africa had already been well established among settler-colonialists before Union.[122]

The discussions at the public meeting in 1916 and the discourses about what would become the University of the Witwatersrand fitted comfortably within Bill Readings' assessment of the modern university as "The University of Culture." Wits was expected to provide both the technical and cultural training to develop a national culture and to ensure that Johannesburg as a town was able to contribute to how that national culture developed. The University's course and degree offerings reflected a practical manifestation of how this South African modernity was

[119] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 67. Sir Gregory Cory of Rhodes University College, wrote to William Macmillan that "are you not really a big (very big) Technical Institute where the hard-up and struggling workingman want to get some sort of diploma by attending evening classes?"
[120] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg," 13.
[121] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 6. "in one great central teaching residential university the various sections of these divided communities might come together at the most impressionable years of their lives and form friendships there which would go a very long way to solve some of the difficulties and dangers from which this country has suffered so long."
[122] Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge : Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 159.

imagined. A supplement, "Our University", published in the popular newspaper *The Rand Daily Mail* on 23 November 1923, explicitly claimed a role for Wits in this national project of progress and development. Both the mining and engineering departments self-identified as breaking with traditional (and implicitly outdated) modes of university education, while the Commerce and Afrikaans departments saw their presence in the University's faculties as a sign that Wits was keeping up with national and international trends by expanding Western modernity's reach in the colonies.[123]

Prof. James Findlay wrote that Wits' decision to offer a degree in Commerce alongside the "ancient" faculties of Arts and Science was an attempt by the University to "provide as far as possible for the needs of the community."[124] Findlay, as a professor of Commerce, identified the needs of the Johannesburg community as predominantly "mercantile." He argued that it was necessary to provide a space for the "the youth of today who have no taste for trade, and whose parents are unable to let his education pass beyond the matriculation standard" to develop into an intermediary managerial class, located somewhere between traditional positions of capitalist and the worker.[125] Prof. T.J. Haarhof meanwhile, saw the University's choice to develop Afrikaans literature and philology as teaching subjects as a move to make sure that Wits kept "abreast of the times." [126] Haarhof argued that by treating Afrikaans and English speakers as equal citizens, Wits contributed to the Union's ideal of white South African national identity. Both Findlay and Haarhof saw their subjects as a way of translating local practices into internationally standardised and recognised frameworks. Compatibility between local and international practices seems to have contributed to academics' perception of the city as an emerging metropolis. Haarhof also explicitly refers to the disciplining power of the University as a social institution when he writes about its role in establishing Afrikaans as an educated and respected language.[127] The "Our

[123] James Findlay, "Science of Commerce," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.
[124] Findlay."Science of Commerce…"
[125] Findlay."Science of Commerce…"
[126] T.J. Haarhoff, "Growth of Afrikaans: Inadequate Means to Meet Growing Demand, One Mission of the University," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.
[127] Haarhoff. ""Growth of Afrikaans…". Haarhof argued that in recognising Afrikaans as a cultured and educated language, it should be "the business of the University to make this changed state the rule and not the exception."

University" supplement provides ample examples of various members of Wits' early academic staff who articulated the role of the University as serving the immediate needs of white South Africans and acting as a conduit for the development of a Eurocentric model of modernity.

While the dominant voices in the Johannesburg University Movement had a strong British leaning, by 1916 its members had recognised the necessity of unifying both English- and Afrikaans- speaking white citizens to meet its objectives. Rather than the colonial impulse of the Milner kindergarten period, the University Movement opted to promote a strong regional identity and was seen less as a form of cultural imposition and more as a necessary step towards uplifting the conditions of the white working-class settled in and around the mining towns of the Witwatersrand in the new self-governing Union.

ii. "Our University": broad definition but a narrow (racial) interpretation of Wits as a "University of the People", 1922-1939

The "Our University" supplement in the popular *Rand Daily Mail* newspaper in 1923 included articles detailing the research focus, achievements and degree structure of each department at Wits. Academic departmental heads wrote most of the articles and focused on explaining how the department or faculty in question would contribute to developing the city and South Africa and gain recognition for Wits internationally. The supplement also discussed organisational and cultural characteristics of Wits, with contributions by the Student Representative Council, Principal Jan Hofmeyr and members of the University Council. The "Our University" supplement emphasised the idea of Wits as a "University of the People."[128] The conceptualisation of "the people" in this period, however, differs vastly from later associations of the term, linked for instance to the Congress of the People in 1955. This section explores which communities were thought of as included within the limits of the pronoun 'our', deployed in the "Our University" supplement. The articles from the "Our University" supplement are read together with Bruce Murray's institutional history, *Wits: The Early Years* to sketch various internal constituencies the

[128] J.D. Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.

University engaged with and how ideas about the public roles of Wits circulated between 1922 and 1939.

One of the earliest acts in setting the public expectations for the new university was its naming. The choice of "The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg" over the more geographically specific "University of Johannesburg" was an intentional decision by the University's founders to specify the community it intended to serve. This choice aimed to position the new university as a welcoming and open regional institution, serving the entire country. Beyond providing education for a growing urban population, Wits took on the task of creating an ideological bridge that connected communities across the Rand to the developing new, post-Union national culture that included white people with different ethnic and class backgrounds. The name also acknowledged the influence of mining and industrial capital, which was active on the Witwatersrand and played a significant role in funding Wits' establishment.

Wits promoted its regional character by encouraging academic staff to give lectures and talks in outlying towns such as Germiston, Klerksdorp, Middleburg, Benoni and Potchefstroom.[129] The lectures sought to "bring town and country into closer touch."[130] These lectures were not credit-bearing but are arguably one of the earliest manifestations of the University's idea of social responsibility. The municipalities around Johannesburg and smaller Rand towns funded these lectures and also "generous support" for Wits. This support included both financial and capital assets such as Plein Square, which became the site for the University's first major building project. This all shows the embeddedness of Wits' emphasis on its regional identity in its early years.[131]

In terms of demographic representation, Johannesburg locals formed a majority of Wits' students (53%) as late as 1939, but students other Reef towns and from the Transvaal more widely constituted a significant minority within the university (19% in 1939). Given the relative underdevelopment of secondary schooling in the region, these enrolment numbers suggest that

[129] Rheinallt Jones. "University of the People…"
[130] Rheinallt Jones. "University of the People…"
[131] Plein Square was the first piece of land granted to what would become the University of the Witwatersrand. It was donated by the Transvaal government. Now known as East Campus, the Transvaal Technical Institute first occupied wood and iron buildings at Plein Square from 1905. The first permanent building of the future university was completed in 1908. Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 15 & 30.

Wits had successfully established itself as an institution for both rural and urban white communities in the Witwatersrand region.[132] A line of commemorative trees on today's East Campus is a tangible example of the University's continued recognition of these municipalities' contributions to the establishment of the University. They were donated by Witwatersrand mayors to celebrate Wits' Golden Jubilee in 1972.

The "Our University" supplement also mentions annual refresher courses for schoolteachers. Interestingly, this link between the University and teacher training as a form of public responsibility is one which is picked up at various points in the University's history, and this thesis revisits this connection in chapter 6. The University advised the Technical Education Board of the Transvaal and also participated in the Joint Matriculation Board, showing from an early stage that Wits saw itself as responsible for supporting education throughout the Transvaal and the country.

The formal incorporation of the Medical School into the University in 1924, furthered the idea of the University as a skill-centre and public resource. The University then established student clinics at various points across the Rand, starting in Alexandra Township in 1929.[133] The "Our University" supplement in 1923 mentions several communities not catered for by the Johannesburg's health-care system that the University hoped to assist through research and professional training in the future. These included a Children's Hospital and a "Native" Hospital, as well as the start of training for a "Hospital of Nervous People and Mental Diseases."[134] Johannesburg was also considered well-placed relative to the rest of southern-Africa for a hospital specialising in the treatment of "Tropical Disease." The "Our University" supplement's description of research into Tropical Disease (at the Medical School) and Stock Disease (at the School of Veterinary Science) indicate that these departments were very invested in 'curing' Africa's harsh and disease-laden environment to make it more accommodating for the 'European'.[135]

[132] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 337.
[133] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: Jubilee Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand, 1972), 95; Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 249.
[134] Raymond Dart, "Medical Centre: Rich Storehouse for the Student, Its Wealth of Material, Strategic Point for the Continent," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.
[135] Annie Porter, "Modern Medicine in Africa, Diseases of the Tropics, Rand University's Fine Facilities," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.

While developing technical and utilitarian skills was not the only motivation for establishing Wits, this function was considered one of the University's greatest redeeming features. Wits' location on the Rand and growth out of the School of Mines made it an essential part of "the development and utilisation of the mineral resources of the nation."[136] Professor G.H. Stanley, head of Metallurgy, measured Wits' utility to society through the high proportion of his department's graduates entering into industry "at the rank of 'head office' … mine managers, and… inspectors of mines" and one "member of the Union legislature."[137] In evaluations like this, Stanley defined university graduate's achievements in terms of their movement into white South Africa's economic and political leadership class. As products of Wits, graduates significantly shaped the University's publicness. By taking up positions of leadership in business and politics, Wits' graduates, although most likely personally driven by other motivations, also fulfilled the expectation expressed by a columnist in *The Rand Daily Mail* that the University should act as "a repository of a genuine South African culture yet to be created, a special training-ground for the honest and careful development of the country, and a leavening centre of loyalty."[138]

However, alternative views about the role of universities have also operated at Wits from its formation. Professor W.M. Macmillan, the first head of Wits' History Department, for example, chose to emphasise a different priority for the public role of the University in his contribution to the "Our University" supplement. While not in direct conflict with Stanley's notion of utilitarianism, Macmillian sought to counter to the perception of the University as merely a "glorified school at which youths and maidens have as much knowledge poured into them as will serve … examinations."[139] This indicates a slight difference from the ideological focus of university-as-training-ground-for-industry to the university-as-moral-and-intellectual-leader. Macmillan saw Wits' recognition as a university, rather than a technical college in 1922 as an exciting and vital step towards "slowly reverting back to an older and nobler function as the nerve

[136] Stanley, "Engineering, Modern Note of the University," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.
[137] Stanley. "Engineering, Modern Note…"
[138] *Rand Daily Mail.* 21 May 1903 cited in Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 17.
[139] W.M. Macmillian, "University and the Workers," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.

centre of all the intellectual life of the community in and for whose sake it exists."[140] This notion of 'looking back' once again emphasised the tradition of the European Romantic University that South African academics of European descent (and often training) associated themselves with.

iii. Place & Public Access: debates about the location of Wits

Wits' physical location has also played a role in shaping ideas about its capabilities and responsibilities. Henri Lefebvre's conception of space as both influencing and being influenced by social relations provides a useful avenue to think about the discourses that shaped Wits' publicness beyond the realm of discussion.[141]

In the aftermath of the South African war, the Ware Commission of 1903 saw the question of its location as a being "of great social and moral concern."[142] Initially, Johannesburg, with its easy access to future students, the mines as well as a large hospital, was a promising location for developing a local professional class. It was also distinctly British in character – an advantage in the Milner period, but less so a decade later under General Louis Botha's first Union government. After 1910 the state's political interest in higher education shifted – as did the locus of power. Pretoria, with its strong Afrikaner character, became the administrative capital of the Union. The move was a post-war compromise to reconsolidate political power in the bases of the old Republican authorities and create distance between the political capital and location of the British military command and its Randlord allies in Johannesburg. In these early years of Union, this political shift, as well as prevailing notions of the type of environment necessary for effective university education, contributed to the delay in establishing Wits University.[143] Was Johannesburg a suitable place to be a seat of higher education? Conservative critics saw early twentieth-century Johannesburg as a den of debauchery, crime and economic speculation – a place lacking sufficient probity to shape the moral character of a new national elite. Evidence

[140] Macmillian. "University and the Workers,"

[141] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 317. While not fully explored in this thesis, Lefebvre's notions of physical, discursive and experimental space; further research into the relationship between physical space and the production of Wits' publicness would make a meaningful contribution to the field.

[142] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 15.

[143] "The Case of the Witwatersrand for a University Charter" (Johannesburg: Council of Education, Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, March 1921), 19, AD843 1kb 32.1 (file 1), Historical Papers Research Archive, University of Witwatersrand. Correspondence between Malan and University College Johannesburg.

of this attitude was apparent in Milner's reform strategies as well as the Ware Commission, which initially recommended that the functions of a university in Johannesburg be split between a technical institute within the city and a teaching university, on a large farm outside of the city limits.[144] By 1916, the image of Johannesburg as "a university of crime" was popular enough that J W Treu felt it necessary to defend the notion of an urban-based university in his speech at the public meeting in the Johannesburg Town Hall.[145]

The Witwatersrand Council of Education sought to counter the public imagination of universities as isolated, elite spaces embodied by the Oxbridge model. Instead, they described Johannesburg's aspirations as similar to the "Birmingham University" model, where industry and the University engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship.[146] Birmingham was one of the "civic universities" which emerged in England as a wave of university reforms promoted new organisational models which were secular, more technically focused and more widely accessible than elite Anglican institutions like Oxford and Cambridge.[147] This shift became significant to Wits' identity, particularly in its early years when it attempted to frame itself as a "University of the People" in contrast to the exclusive isolation of Stellenbosch and Rhodes, as well as UCT on the mountainside in Cape Town. Wits' urban character continues to play an important role in its institutional identity. In the 1970s, Vice-Chancellor Professor G.R. Bozzoli argued that South African English universities should align their research interests with the subjects they are physically located to address. For Wits, these areas were considered engineering, mining and geology in the sciences and sociology, anthropology and the economics of developing nations in the humanities.[148] These research areas came to play a large role in Wits' self-image from as early

[144] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 21. The farm, Frakenwald, would serve as a site for quiet reflection, free of intellectual distraction and balance the industrious urban character of the University.
[145] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg," 10.
[146] Similarly linked to comparisons in other industrial centres in Britain such as Bristol, Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds and Liverpool. Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 10.
[147] Strydom, "Broad South Africanism and Higher Education: The Transvaal University College (1908-1919)", 40.
[148] G.R. Bozzoli. "The Role of English Universities in South Africa" in van der Merwe and Welsh, *The Future of the University in Southern Africa*, 191. For earlier references see "The Case of the Witwatersrand for a University Charter," 6. specifically mentions Medicine, Engineering, Mining and Chemical Technology. Bantu Studies is also mentioned on pg 14.

as the 1920s, and many of them are still high priority research areas according to the *Vision 2022* framework.[149]

Despite Johannesburg's strong British culture, Wits' location outside of the former British Cape Colony also positioned the University as welcoming a 'national' community.[150] Wits' urban location reduced the physical gap between town and gown, enabling closer relationships between the University, Johannesburg's working population and industrial business elites. The "Our University" supplement notes a "growing demand for public lectures"[151] which were reportedly held two or three times a week, usually in lecture halls on campus in the evenings.[152] The audiences and topics of these lectures varied but were provided access to the 'university culture' to those not formally part of the University itself.[153]

Wits' cultural influence reached non-university members in other ways too. The University engaged its immediate geographic community through cultural societies such as the Geographical Society and the English Association, whose lectures were generally well attended by non-students. The Dramatic Society had perhaps the most overt public orientation. It aimed to unite "Professors and students in a common activity … uniting University and town in a common enjoyment."[154] The dramatic and musical productions of the society became major attractions in Johannesburg's cultural life.[155] It was particularly successful in the twenties, less so in the thirties. While immediate geographic proximity is insufficient in fully defining the people whom a university serves, it does have a significant impact on perceptions of community ownership and responsibility.[156]

[149] University of the Witwatersrand, "Wits Vision 2022 Strategic Framework," 29.
[150] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 297. 'National' in this sense is restricted to the white Union South Africaness discussed previously. While the admission policies of the Institute did not discriminate against race, the TTI had no recorded black African students and only one Chinese student.
[151] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[152] Macmillian, "University and the Workers."
[153] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[154] C.M.D and J.G.L, "Drama in the University, Objects of the U.D.C, Sheridan's 'Critics' Next," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 1, 1923, sec. "Our University" Supplement.
[155] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 353.
[156] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 354.

The implications of Wits' location not only in Johannesburg but also as an African institution located on the periphery of the British Empire, contributed further to the discourse about its public role. In its early years, Wits' position concerning its African identity can best be imagined as a platform for what Saul Dubow called "a curious brand of sub-imperialism."[157] Contrary to contemporary discourses of "Africanisation" of Science, in his opening address at the South African Association for the Advancement of Science at its 1929 conference J.H. Hofmeyr reinforced the view of Africa as a scientific subject.[158] The Principal-turned-politician saw the intellectual mission of the South African academe as heir to the white man's civilising mission of the nineteenth century.[159]

Beyond the location of campuses, the design and physical environment of university building are also important. The classical columns and Romanesque style colonnades at the Wits Campus at Milner Park (now Main Campus) were an attempt by University authorities to create a physical link between the new university and the Classical European idea of a University rather than more economical, modern architectural styles. Similar debates took place in 1948 during the design of the University College of Ibadan that later became the University of Nigeria.[160] The rolling lawns and classical building styles did not necessarily fit the image of the utilitarian and popularly accessible civic university but demonstrate the multiple influences at play in the design of the University. In more recent times, debates about university buildings are not limited to their architectural style or design efficiency. The naming of buildings and the selection of artworks and commemorative spaces were an important issue in the 2015 student protests, ultimately leading to the renaming of Wits' central administrative building.[161] The public response about naming and the decoration of the physical spaces on campuses re-emphasise the production of space as both a physical and a social phenomenon. How the University chose to use its physical space to curate and engage with its history is a reflection of the public mandate that university members

[157] Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge : Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820-2000*, 212.
[158] Dart, "Medical Centre: Rich Storehouse for the Student, Its Wealth of Material, Strategic Point for the Continent"; Porter, "Modern Medicine in Africa, Diseases of the Tropics, Rand University's Fine Facilities." Convey similar sentiments in the 1923 "Our University" supplement.
[159] Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge : Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820-2000*, 212.
[160] Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development*, 67.
[161] Senate House, so named in 1977, was renamed in 2017 to Soloman Mahlangu House, the name given to it by students who occupied the building as part of the FeesMustFall protests in 2015.

and management imagine for the University and, as the institution ages, what parts of this history remain prominent and visible.

iv. Wits & its People

The socio-economic profile of Wits' graduates was noticeably different from previous generations of South Africans with university education. This difference was primarily a result of the rapidly industrialising mining-economy on the Witwatersrand. Many Wits students were the sons and daughters of white working- and middle- class people, as opposed to the situation in the Cape where students tended to be from historically wealthy families. In the first decades of the twentieth-century state-sponsored bursaries were not widely available and so students relied on family wealth or their ability to work and study. Although still only a minority of the country's adult population, Wits made Higher Education significantly more accessible to people outside of the Cape, and those who could not afford to go overseas to further their education. In this early period, Wits students were predominantly from Johannesburg, the Witwatersrand and elsewhere in the Transvaal.[162] Wits' location in the interior of the country was significant in this regard. Working-class families were now able to afford university education for their children without needing to subsidise long-distance moves. Wits' proximity to Johannesburg also made it easier for people already working on the Rand to pursue industry-related study at the University. The relatively rapid rates of enrolment in part, demonstrate these trends. The School of Mines' student population increased from only 77 in 1916 to 301 in 1919. By 1923, Wits University had over 1100 students and by 1927, the University reached 1400 students.[163] Murray notes a lack of sources detailing the socio-economic background of Wits students in the pre-war years. However, he describes the university as a vehicle for "upward mobility predominantly for first-generation Jewish South Africans, rural Afrikaners, and lower-middle-class English-speaking white South Africans."[164]

[162] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 337.
[163] Dart, "Medical Centre: Rich Storehouse for the Student, Its Wealth of Material, Strategic Point for the Continent"; Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 337. This growth was relative to an estimated 231 558 inhabitants of Johannesburg; with 149 633 classified as European and 132 005 reportedly classified as Coloured (using an inclusive definition of non-White people).
[164] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 337.

Despite being more accessible than Stellenbosch and UCT, Wits did not make university education widely accessible to people living on the Rand. Academics like Macmillan saw this fact as placing a "special burden" on Wits as an institution. This was "to meet and encourage the educational wants of our great industrial population."[165] Here, he referenced the emergence of Britain's Workers Education Association and the establishment of Johannesburg's Workers Education Association in 1914 "before our University was much more than a dream."[166] Macmillan noted several challenges to worker education in South Africa and emphasised the role of university staff and students in enabling this education. A significant contribution which he imagined the Wits community making was first to volunteer time for worker education and secondly to adapt worker education to "specifically South African problems."[167] In promoting the link between members of the university community and workers, McMillian demonstrated a long-standing awareness by some Wits academics of the University's elite class position. His ideas also indicated an associated expectation by both academics and external communities that the 'intelligentsia' should contribute to trying to "heal the breach between the classes" through education.[168] This position was articulated in several different articles in the "Our University" supplement, suggesting that it had wide currency among the departmental representatives included in the supplement.

The majority of Wits' teaching staff were initially foreign-born and foreign-trained academics predominantly from Scotland, England or America.[169] Although by 1956, when Principle Raikes retired, Wits had developed a preference for South African academics, international staff members were influential in the institution's early decades. The foreign academics brought elements of their previous universities' cultures to Wits, for example, through the literature students were exposed to, the conferences and journals which they read and wrote in, post-graduate study opportunities abroad and even in norms relating to sporting and cultural life. Professor Maingard's contribution to the "Our University" supplement, explicitly drew on this

[165] Macmillian, "University and the Workers."
[166] Macmillian, "University and the Workers."
[167] Macmillian, "University and the Workers."
[168] Macmillian, "University and the Workers."
[169] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 91.

diverse international experience to shape "the country's intellectual potentialities."[170] In keeping with the intended vision of Wits as a university for all, the first Principal, Jan Hofmeyr was an Afrikaans-speaking, South African-born, Oxford-educated academic. His inauguration speech in 1919 placed a strong emphasis on the University as a place of racial, class and religious non-discrimination.[171]

As part of its desire to be an inclusive and accessible institution, Wits sought to expand its reach through distance and part-time learning. While Wits remained a primarily full-time institution, the University promoted the idea of extending professional education outside of the physical space of its campus in the 1920s. Part-time and distance learning targeted the white, semi-professional working class who sought formal qualification to enhance their experiential learning or practical work.[172] This cohort contributed to the early years of the University's growth, given the relatively poor state of secondary education in the Transvaal in the early 1920s. Once established, Wits created a greater impetus for secondary school students to take and pass the matriculation exam, required for admission into undergraduate study. Although professionalisation and skills training was seemingly the main focus of the University in the first two decades of its existence, it would be a misrepresentation to argue that research and the pursuit of new knowledge was not an active part of the life of Wits from its earliest days.[173] Technological advancement and economic utility were important driving function for *some* of Wits' research, but comments and work by academics such as Raymond Dart (Anatomy and Palaeoanthropology), William Macmillan (History) and Annie Porter (Medicine) show that the academic pursuit of knowledge was not limited to those projects with immediate economic benefits and applications.

The focus on professionalisation and skills training at Wits University was reflective of the role that the University saw for itself: to integrate the community of Johannesburg and Rand residents as a critical part of the newly emerging nation. J.D. Rheinallt Jones, the liberal spokesperson and

[170] Maingard, "Rich Promise of Greatness," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 11, 1923, sec. "Our University."
[171] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 289.
[172] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[173] "The Case of the Witwatersrand for a University Charter," 31.

secretary of the Witwatersrand Council of Education, had a vision that "every adult who so desires should have the opportunity of becoming a University student."[174] However, the adults about which Wits was primarily concerned were young adult, white, male South Africans, and the education which the University focused on making available was dominated by the professions – law, medicine and engineering. In the 1920s, this was necessary for the contemporary and future needs of the country's economy. While this professionalizing function played a foundational role in setting the mandate of the newly established university, given Wits' roots in the South African School of Mines and Technology, it is clear from the writing in "Our University" that upon transitioning to a formal University institution the role of research began to proliferate at the new University.

The primary role that research seems to have played in the early years of the University was to establish Wits' international reputation and prestige. Research in this period seems to have been driven mainly by the research interests of individual academics and the relatively meagre resources available to the new University.[175] While not singling out Wits University, Saul Dubow's *Commonwealth of Knowledge* (2006) argues that South African universities and research groups in the 1920s saw themselves contributing to global knowledge networks primarily through the frame of imperial networks.[176] The prominence of Wits professors like Raymond Dart and Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr[177] at the South African Association for the Advancement of Science conference in 1929, which had strong ties to parallel British bodies, afforded Wits the opportunity to showcase the type of scientific community the University was building. These included the development of the "Bantu Studies" Department, Dart's 1924 discovery of the Taung Skull and the 1936 Kalahari-Bushmen Expedition,[178] as well as innovations, particularly in the medical and

[174] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[175] Martin Meredith, *Born in Africa : The Quest for the Origins of Human Life* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 10.
[176] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 110.
[177] The inaugural Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand between 1922 -1924, then served two terms as Vice-Chancellor and then Chancellor between 1938 and 1948 after being appointed to various roles in the political administration. Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 76-92.
[178] Christa Kuljian, *Darwin's Hunch: Science, Race and the Search for Human Origins* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2016), 63.

associated fields, such as the establishment of South Africa's first Department of Occupational Therapy in 1948.

Wits was able to compete with the more well-known Cape institutions for recognition as a space of intellectual and moral leadership because of a combination of its interest in research, an association with scientific progress and the cultivation of a particular brand of settler-colonial respectability. Rheinhallt Jones hoped that through its students the University's "influence may be radiated"[179] into broader sectors of society to further the noble aims of an "educated spiritualised democracy."[180] The Witwatersrand Council of Education viewed this as the modernising responsibility of the University. They saw the type of education that the University was interested in as going beyond merely providing its graduates with degrees, but shaping the social imaginary and form of a future white South African public sphere.

This chapter has shown that the Johannesburg University Movement was not exclusively driven by concerns for educational quality. The 1916 public meeting about the university question underlined that the establishment of an independent, degree-granting university was a critical institution in developing a civic culture of respectability. Both the concepts of civic culture and respectability drew strongly on the ideas of colonial modernity, through which the newly emerging Union of South Africa sought to create an education system which would integrate easily into an imperial academic public. Wits' vision, as described by the "Our University" supplement, relied heavily on comparison with the British civic universities. These comparisons were necessary to counteract the prevailing sentiment of the day, which was sceptical of the capacity of urban, working-class people to engage in meaningful intellectual activity. Through its engagement and proximity with the rapidly developing city of Johannesburg, contribute to South African national identity in much the same way in which Reading's university of culture

[179] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[180] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."

"[watches] over the spiritual life of the people of the rational state, reconciling ethnic traditions and statist rationality."[181]

Wits created a hybrid public image of itself in this period as an institution which was welcoming and aspirational at the same time as it self-confidently sought to educate and discipline both its students and the broad public it imagined itself serving. Rhetoric like Hofmeyr's "non-discrimination" and Rheinhallt Jones' "every adult" marked the beginning of what became Wits' reputation as a champion of openness, but this sense of openness was all framed in terms of a highly racialised imagination of the public sphere.

[181] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 15.

Chapter 3:

People on the Periphery of "Our University"; Race at Wits 1920s-1940s

Image 4: Dr Benedict Wallet Vilakazi was Wits' first Black academic-appointee and went on to become the University's first Black PhD graduate.

3. People on the Periphery of "Our University": race at Wits 1920s-1940s

Nancy Fraser's recognition of the simultaneous and overlapping coexistence of multiple publics is helpful for understanding publicness at Wits University.[182] Chapter 2 highlighted the rhetoric of inclusive and merit-based self-image that the University promoted in the 1920s. This chapter takes a closer look at whom the publics and communities relegated to the peripheries of Wits' university community were from the 1920s to the 1940s. It focuses on race as a category of othering, but a similar analysis through a gendered or religious lens could be applied. This chapter shows that prospective Black students, staff members and the few Black students who did register at Wits essentially engaged with the University as second-class citizens despite the technically non-discriminatory 1922 charter of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Chapter 2 illustrated some of the ways that the primary publics that the new University imagined serving were white. Murray's observation that "Wits very much reflected the prejudices of the society to which it belonged."[183] contradicts the emphasis on the University's 'open', non-discriminatory history which became a core part of Wits' public image in the 1950s.[184] Although the terminology of the 'open' university only became popular in the 1950s, by the 1930s Wits had established itself as the institutional home of liberalism in South Africa[185] and Prof. W.M. Macmillian (History) and Prof. R.F.A. Hoernlé (Philosophy) came to represent two variants of the liberal approaches and liberal critique of South African segregation, with Hoernlé's more conservative approach being more prevalent among academic and public networks until the end

[182] Fraser, "Transnational Public Sphere: Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World," 17.
[183] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.
[184] "Open Universities" is a label which emerged in 1950s to describe predominantly white, English- speaking universities that did not formally discriminate against race and gender prior to the passing of the 1959 Extension of Universities Act. The Open Universities as a term most often refers to Wits and UCT, although Rhodes and the University of Natal have also identified as Open Universities at particular moments.
[185] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 126.

of the 1930s.[186] This chapter argues that Wits' "Liberal Tradition"[187] was not imbued with a strong sense of racial equality before the advent of Apartheid.

Teresa Barnes's 2019 book *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonization* articulates a compelling critique of the limitations of what she refers to as the "protest-only" narrative of white, liberal, English-speaking universities, including Wits.[188] Barnes' conceptual framework which locates the history of South African liberalism as "one of the conceptual and operational wellsprings of apartheid" with a diverse set of ideological positions,[189] has been particularly useful for scaffolding the racialised tensions in which this thesis shows played a central role in shaping Wits' public roles and responsibilities.

i. Admission and Attitudes in the Inter-War Years

While sources like the "Our University" supplement, *The case of the Witwatersrand for a university charter* and the minutes of the 1916 public meeting do not make explicitly racist or derogatory comments about Black people, the occasional references to "Non-Europeans" or "Natives" in these sources mark a noticeable lack of consideration and engagement with the perspectives of Black individuals or communities. References to Black communities happen indirectly through reference to "white citizens"[190] or describing predominantly Black geographic communities that the University intended to provide medical services to. Murray's histories of Wits do discuss discrimination against Black applicants, staff and students at points, however; he very rarely draws on Black voices in his narrative. By limiting the description of the experiencesof students and staff of colour at Wits, the University's institutional history obscuresits relationship to Black South Africans.

The label of Wits as an 'open' university, which became popular in the 1950s, appears to have emanated from two sources in University's early years: its establishment under the University's

[186] Murray, 132.
[187] University of the Witwatersrand, "History of Wits," 2019, https://www.wits.ac.za/about-wits/history-and-heritage/. Date Accessed: 5 September 2018.
[188] Teresa Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 48.
[189] Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid,* 42.
[190] Council of Education Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, "The University Question: Report of the Speeches Delivered at a Public Meeting of Citizens in the Town Hall Johannesburg," 9. Or the "European population" in "The Case of the Witwatersrand for a University Charter," 16.

Private Act and Statues of 1921, which provided for non-discriminatory admission, as well as the inaugural address of the University College Johannesburg in 1919 by Principal J.H. Hofmeyr, who proclaimed that Wits "should know no distinction of class or wealth, race or creed"[191]. While the label of 'open' does not seem to appear before the Academic Freedom debates discussed in chapter 4 and 5, these two founding actions contribute to the construction of the myth that the University endeavoured to admit students on an equitable academic basis from its start. This chapter surfaces an alternative understanding of the long tradition of Wits as an 'open' institution. The founding doctrines of the University appear instead to have circulated strongly paternalistic ideas about Wits' imagined relationships with Black publics.

In line with authors like Steven Friedman (2014) and Tereasa Barnes (2019), this thesis argues that the forms of liberalism most often associated with Wits University enabled the University to co-exist comfortably with the increasingly stark racial discrimination in twentieth-century South Africa while at the same time claiming a moral high-ground. While a number of the heads of department who authored the "Our University" supplement extolled the values of education as part of the aspirations of *all* men, texts circulating about the role of the new university at the time reveal the implicit constraints that existed on the University's imagined publics and student body. Edgar Brookes, a significant figure in South African liberalism, distilled the majority view of "White liberal opinion in South Africa" in his Phelps-Stoke lecture for the South African Institute for Race Relations in 1933.[192] He posited that "though Non-Europeans should not be admitted *everywhere,* they should surely be admitted *somewhere*" and that the first "complete University institution in South Africa" would be one who was able to admit Black students while "keeping the loyalty of its European students of both races."[193] His comments indicate that even within the limitations of 1930s Johannesburg liberalism, Wits had not attained a meaningful level of multiracial admissions. Teresa Barnes' framework of spatial and temporal liberalism convincingly argues that liberalism among white South Africans was not a homogenous political

[191] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 289.
[192] Murray, 128. Although the South African Institute for Race Relations was established as an independent organisation in 1929, it developed a strong relationship with Wits University and its faculty members, to the extent that the Institutes offices were located on campus and paid no rent to the University.
[193] Murray, "University and the Workers",311.

ideology.[194] Together with Warner's understanding of how temporality and the imagined spatial boundaries of circulation constitute discursive publics,[195] this framework allows a more nuanced understanding of the imagined boundaries between racially segregated South African public spheres in this period.

In building an understanding of Wits' publicness, it is helpful to differentiate between the discrimination and exclusions, which resulted from imposed legal restrictions, and those that were self-imposed by Wits' decision-making bodies. Wits' open-admission policies were slow in evolving and often mirrored the reluctance of departmental or faculty leadership to accept Black students at the University, especially before World War II.[196] In 1937, Wits had approximately two thousand students. Only ten of these students were Black, with five classified as "African" and five who were either "Indian" or "Coloured."

According to Murray, there was "growing pressure from blacks [sic] themselves for admission to Wits",[197] indicated by applications to study at the University. This suggested both a growing demand for appropriate education and access to Wits specifically.[198] In the discourse of the time, the University describes this cohort of prospective students as "non-European", with differentiation between black Africans and those categorised as "Indian", "Coloured" or "Asiatic" appearing in some sources. Dumisani Ntshangase's 1995 biographical reflection on Wits' first black African staff member, Dr B.W. Vilakazi, cautions against the historical tendency to describe Black experiences as homogenous.[199] Ntshangase argues for the recognition of multiple black African-identities, which he differentiates primarily through class, but which also consider educational attainment, religion, linguistic and ethnic identities as well as mobility between urban and rural spaces. The discussion of Vilakazi's appointment by this diverse Black public

[194] Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, 30.
[195] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 2002, 65 & 97.
[196] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.
[197] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311.
[198]On 11 June 1932, Raikes wrote to the Secretary for Education, on behalf of Wits Senate "The Senate is well aware of the difficulties inherent in this problem but at the same time wishes to bring to the notice of the minister of education that the number of applications from coloured and native students is increasing, and no definite policy… exists for council to follow." cited in Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 309.
[199] Dumisani Krushchev Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," Seminar Paper / Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand No. 384 (Braamfontein: University of the Witwatersrand. Institute for Advanced Social Research, 1995), 3.

sphere later in this chapter highlights that the 1916 campaign to establish a university in Johannesburg for "Europeans",[200] had not been compromised by the University statutes and Principal Hofmeyr's advocacy for an open university.[201]

In November 1934 the principal of Sastri College in Durban submitted an enquiry to Principal J H Hofmeyr asking whether Wits accepted Indian students.[202] Hofmeyr affirmed Wits' open admission policy, citing the entry requirements outlined by the University's charter; namely the possession of Matriculation Certificate of the South African Joint Matriculation Board or equivalent, without making any reference to race. While Hofmeyr's reply suggests a straight-forward, academic-centred position, the fact that the principal at Sastri College felt the need to make a formal enquiry about racial admissions ten years after Wits admitted its first coloured student,[203] illustrates the lasting ambiguity in the public mind about who Wits was willing and able to accept as students.

Wits' first Black students appear to have enrolled as part of a selective summer school in the Bantu Studies Department, established in 1923.[204] The Bantu Studies Department's first Black full-time student was J.S. Twala, an administrative clerk for the Department of Native Affairs who registered in 1931. Instead, these offerings on vernacular language, law and culture were primarily for white aspiring civil servants. In this sense, these courses were intended to equip students with the knowledge to effectively manage and control the Black experience through the country's increasingly exclusionary legal system.[205]

Murray describes the Council's 1934 annual report as representing a "more positive or 'open' policy" on Black admissions than earlier council reports.[206] The actual text of the report shows

[200] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.
[201] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 95.
[202] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311.
[203] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 304. The first Coloured student admitted to the medical school was allowed in 1926, after legal consultation suggested that the University Charter did not provide grounds for exclusion on the basis of race. 304. Shortly thereafter Senate (academics) appointed a committee, with representation from Council for the university's position regarding the future admission of black and/or coloured students.

[204] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 114.
[205]Elizabeth Le Roux, *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: Between Complicity and Resistance* (Leiden: Koninklike Brill, 2016), 57; Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[206] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 310.

Council's willingness to follow the letter of the law and its concerns about reactions to this policy.[207] The ability of different faculties to independently determine their admission criteria further complicated the issue of Black admissions. The Medical and Dental Schools represented the most persistent challenge to Black admissions at Wits, both as a result of the need for clinical training and the conservative views of influential Wits staff members. The Medical School eventually began admitting Black students for pre-clinical training in 1937, and, by 1940, funding was made available through scholarships for the Smuts government and later the Homeland governments for Black students to complete their training at the Johannesburg Native Hospital. When the Natal Non-European Medical School opened in 1952, Wits restricted its admissions of Black students through a quota.[208] The Wits Dental School, at the time the only one in the country, did not admit Black students for full clinical training until 1952, following heavy criticism from liberal colleagues associated with Wits and the Institute for Race Relations.[209]

The Medical School provides perhaps the most illustrative example of the contentious debate regarding Black admission to Wits. This was both because of the lucrative professional opportunities available for doctors as well as sensitivities in a racially segregated society about inter-racial bodily contact. Before the Extension of Universities Act, 1959 Wits had restricted Black admissions to varying degrees in; the Medical and Dental Schools, the Faculty of Engineering, the BA in Fine Arts, and the BA in Logopedics.[210] In 1928 a subcommittee of Wits' Council submitted recommendations to the Department of Native Affair's Loram Committee[211] which found that;

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[207] "Since the Act and Statues of the University do not make mention of differences of colour or race, enquiries were treated without reference to such contingencies and it may therefore be expected that students belonging to [Indian, Coloured, Native] categories will, in the near future, offer themselves for the various course of study. It is hoped that the exercise of tact and discretion will avoid the difficulties which are sometimes attendant upon the closer contact of the various races." Council Report, 1934 cited in Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 310–11.

[208] Bruce Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 1990): para. 9.

[209] Mervyn Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996), 5; Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 59.

[210] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 7.

[211] The Loram Committee was appointed in 1928 to "inquire into the training of natives in medicine and public health" in response to a growing national question on the appropriate forms of health provisions for Africans in the Union. Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 302.

a) That if the Government decides that provision of facilities for the training of the Non-European in medicine should be provided, the Council considers that no separate school should be instituted for the purpose, but that the facilities should be offered by one of the existing Medical Schools.
b) That this University is prepared to undertake the training under the following conditions;
    i. In the view of the strong prejudices of the Community, Non-European students cannot be admitted to the existing medical classes … they must be taught in separate classes.
    ii. The same training should be given and the same standard demanded as for European Medical Students.
    iii. As the finances of this University cannot support the additional burden…full provision should be made [by the government] for such additional costs, including the necessary buildings and equipment as well as the recurring expenses.[212]

The above submission by Wits to the Loram Commission provided several insights into the imagined public and social responsibilities of the University. Firstly, the reference to "the strong prejudices of the Community" is sufficiently ambiguous to obscure whether it is the university community or a broader, external community (or both) that opposes racial integration. The statement furthermore indicates that despite the negative connotations of the term "prejudice", the committee members who compiled this submission considered the University sufficiently accountable to this prejudiced community to claim that racially integrated medical classes were impossible. Given that so much of the Wits University Movement's emphasis was on the need for a University that was not merely a site for the technical reproduction of skills, but a moral, democratising and modernising project, it is clear that in Wits' early years, democratic participation was imagined as limited to a white community. A generous reading of the excerpt mentioned above could suggest that "the Community" is an external body, at least external to

[212] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 306.

the subcommittee who submitted it, thus creating a sense of distance between the "prejudices" experienced outside of the University and experiences of Black students at Wits.

Murray's chapter on "Questions of Discrimination" in *Wits: The Early Years* explains that "[i]n the 1920s and early 1930s the University's Council and Senate seriously contemplated officially adopting a restrictive admissions policy."[213] The question arose at Council in response to applications to Wits by prospective students; first those classified "Coloured", then "Indian" and "African." In 1926 Council established a committee "to ascertain what procedure is necessary to empower the University to exclude students on the ground of colour."[214] The dominant opinion both by the state and the University's legal representation found that the University could establish its admission requirements but was not empowered by the University's charter to discriminate based on colour. While it was possible to amend the University statues, Council was reluctant to include an explicitly racist clause. The official reasoning for the University initiating this investigation was to "avoid the difficulties which are sometimes attendant upon the closer contact of the various races."[215] Wits had by this time started building its public image as a core institution of South African liberalism. This official logic fits Barnes' framework, which differentiates between spatial liberals' anxieties about inter-racial contact and explicitly racist, Social Darwinist opinions about the academic capacities or capabilities of Black South Africans.[216]

Instead of acting itself, the Council rather sought to influence government to "introduce a General Bill empowering any University in South Africa to exclude students on the grounds of colour."[217] A shift in national policy would enable Wits to main its growing reputation as a liberal institution without needing to take full responsibility for discrimination based on race. Part of the argument put forward by Council drew on a statute of the South African School of Mines and Technology (Wits' predecessor institution) that allowed college authorities to deny admission if

[213] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.
[214] Council Minutes III, 2 December 1926., cited in Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.
[215] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311.
[216] Although ideas of education 'destroying' the traditions and cultures of "the natives" were rampant in this period, not only among white right and centre political positions, but also educated black middle class. Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, 36.
[217] Council Minutes III, 2 December 1926., cited in Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.

it was deemed "in the best interest of the college."[218] The University was, at that time, unable to convince the state to legislate in this regard. Council nonetheless deferred making an official decision on Black admission to the Medical School, but, in practice, declined to admit Black students to full medical training, citing a provision of the 1928 Transvaal Public Hospitals Ordinance limited Black clinical training at Johannesburg General Hospital as its primary reason.[219] Murray notes that while this Hospital Board was willing to make arrangements for Black training at Johannesburg's Non-European Hospital, the Medical Faculty did not pursue this option in the 1920s.[220] Only in 1934 did the Medical School agree in principle to admit Black students if separate facilities were arranged "entirely at government expense."[221] Despite Principal Raikes' petitioning of the Smuts government, via then Minister of Education Jan Hofmeyr, government funds for fully segregated medical facilities never became available to Wits.[222] In 1935 Wits did admit Black students to a postgraduate diploma in Public Health, including Dr M.C.C. Motebang. Dr Motebang had qualified as a medical doctor from Edinburgh University and was allowed to take up the postgraduate diploma as there was no practical clinical internship required.[223] Further research on who the students were and what they studied needs to be done to provide a more specific understanding of the Black experience at Wits in its first decades.

Until the outbreak of the Second World War (1938 – 1945) most Black South African doctors and lawyers were trained abroad. This due to lack of opportunity at home as well as the availability of funding networks from missionary and philanthropic bodies. World War II, however, placed severe restrictions on the mobility of those seeking to study at overseas universities and coincided with the first major demographic shift in the student body at Wits University.[224] This

[218] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 305.
[219] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311.
[220] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 14.
[221] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311.
[222] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 36.
[223] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311.
[224] In 1945 Wits had approximately 4000 students enrolled, and 192 of these students were Black. Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 311; Conference of representatives of the University of Cape Town and the University of the

slight opening up came about because of, rather than *despite* government intervention in the University's policy. The wartime Smuts government explicitly requested that Wits increase their enrolment of African medical students, even introducing five annual scholarships as an incentive for African students to study at the Medical School.[225] This request was viewed as a solution to service the growing demand from Black urban and rural communities for doctors, which White doctors could not meet. The scholarships were continued until 1949, after which NUSAS students on the Wits Student Representative Council established the African Medical Scholarships Trust Fund to replace them.[226] The war's limitation on international travel had a parallel impact on the enrolment of students from wealthier white South African families, who had traditionally studied at British institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge. After the war, Wits adopted an affirmative action policy towards accepting former servicemen, which had a further impact on the demographic and political culture on campus. Chapter 4 explores this post-war shift more extensively.

The fact that Wits was able to build an image, at least within white South African circles, as a liberal institution invested equality and meritocratic access to education, without attracting major criticisms for it apparent hypocrisy is significant. It highlights how embedded Wits was in the norms of segregation and white supremacy in South Africa, even if the specific logics or arguments that justified its support for segregation were supposedly less overtly racist than white-only institutions. Secondly, Smuts' government's intervention to promote the training of Black medical students at Wits, complicates the idea that left to its own devices, the Council and other university decision-makers would have moved independently towards a more socially progressive or inclusive position.

Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, *The Open Universities in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1957), 1.

[225] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 66. These scholarships were later repealed when the Apartheid government came to power in 1948, and government support for Medical Students at Wits ended at the end of the 1949 academic year.

[226] Phillip V. Tobias, *Into the Past: A Memoir* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2005), 67.

ii. B.W. Vilakazi: Wits' First Black Academic

In 1935, the Department of Bantu Studies appointed Benedict Wallet Vilakazi as a language assistant. Vilakazi was the first black African academic staff member at the University. His appointment elicited a wide range of public commentary and engagement. His first book with Wits University Press, *Inkondlo kaZulu* (translation: Zulu Horizons), was already in the process of being published as part of the "Bantu Treasury Series" when he was appointed. The head of the Bantu Studies department, Professor C.M. Doke, advocated for the appointment of Vilakazi, arguing that "for the proper teaching of Bantu languages at the University, an African Native Assistant is needed" and that "the principle of learning any foreign language from the native speaker is one which need not be emphasised."[227] Vilakazi's appointment, coming more than ten years after the establishment of the department, elicited such a significant degree of criticism, internally and externally, that a Senate committee chaired by Principal Raikes deemed it necessary to issue a press statement on the matter. The statement, as well as a letter from Raikes to Vilakazi,[228] emphasised that Vilakazi was an assistant, not a lecturer – therefore an optional resource for white students. He would also have no disciplinary power over students.[229] Despite the controversy surrounding his employment, Vilakazi remained in the department for thirteen years until his unexpected death in 1947. He was credited posthumously as Doke's co-author of the *Zulu-English Dictionary* published by Wits University Press in 1948. The Doke-Vilakazi dictionary became one of the Wits' University Press's best sellers – a telling commentary on racist concerns that a Black presence within the University community would compromise the standards of the institution.[230] The success of the Doke-Vilakazi dictionary, as well as the longevity of the Treasury Series highlights that Wits University Press did see Black readers as part of its publication publics.

Following Vilakazi's successful appointment, the Bantu Studies Department under Doke later appointed C.L.S. Nyembezi, F.S.M. Mncube and S.M. Mofokeng as language assistants in isiZulu,

[227] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 312.
[228] Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 9.
[229] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 313.
[230] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*, 83.

isiXhosa and Southern Sotho respectively.[231] In March 1944 (almost ten years after Vilakazi's appointment), the Department of Anatomy appointed W.Z. Conco, a black African graduate of Fort Hare, as a histology laboratory demonstrator. Conco's appointment resulted in a petition by 69 students to have him removed, and similar to Vilakazi, the University defended his appointment emphasising that he was an optional resource for white students, with no disciplinary power.[232] Very little literature on the experiences of these early Black academics at Wits is included in mainstream narratives about the University and is an area for future research.

While at Wits, Benedict Vilakazi attained a B.A.Hons (1936), MA (1938) and D.Litt (1946), becoming the first black African to attain a doctorate in South Africa. Vilakazi was never promoted nor did he receive any substantial pay increases while employed by Wits, despite Doke's proposal in this regard after Vilakazi received his D.Litt.[233] Although Vilakazi's work at the University focused on language teaching, his contribution to the recognition of Black academic and intellectual work at Wits was mainly through his research and writing on Zulu Literature. When Doke appointed him, Vilakazi had already published a novel, *Noma Nini,* in isiZulu through Marianhill mission press and his work was respected by literary scholars.[234]

Vilakazi's appointment and career is part of the oppositional and racially progressive history of Wits University. Official messaging around his appointment was cautious and demonstrated a continued emphasis on white superiority within the University, but it was also a step towards "nudging the door open" for "Non-Europeans" to join the Wits community.[235] Contemporaneously, the "Medical Citizens" of the University[236] and groups in the broader

[231] Exact dates are not provided. Elizabeth Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," *E-REA* 11, no. 11.1 (2013): para. 6, https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.3515.
[232] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 28.
[233] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 313.
[234] Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," para. 12.
[235] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 313.
[236] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 315. The Senate committee undertook a survey of the attitude of Wits medical students towards the 'Medical Training of Non-Europeans' in October of 1934. The responses of the survey, indicated that the majority of Wits Medical students supported the establishment of new medical schools which would be separate (but equal) from the University. Further, a strong majority indicated that should training be supplied by Wits, classes and buildings should be segregated by race and only 31% of the students surveyed believed that Black doctors should be allowed to practice "anywhere they pleased" after qualifying.

Johannesburg community, were continuing to oppose joint academic classes at Wits Medical School. This comparison is useful because it illustrates that different sectors of the University community were able to curate and communicate different messages through different examples of public address. Decisions and debates within University structures also carry different weight in shaping public perceptions based on the relative power of the advocates who decide to champion an issue. Not all debates and discussions that happen in within university structures are reported and discussed in public forums. Decisions about how, when, and what internal university matters are made available to non-academics have traditionally adhered to protocols of hierarchies within the University that have strategically shaped Wits' publicness throughout its history.

J.H. Hofmeyr, founding Principal of the University, was the minister responsible for education at the time of Vilikazi's appointment. Hofmeyr and defended Wits' decision to appoint Vilakazi against parliamentary questions on the matter in 1936 and 1937. Addressing parliament in 1936, he argued that "public opinion acted as a major constraint on the universities" and hindered their ability to move "too far in advance of white public opinion" – particularly about the position of Black people at Wits. [237] He further addressed the issue of publicness directly by observing that "The universities are, in the first place, responsible to the public, because if they do not get support from the public they cannot get support from us either, and then they cannot continue. Therefore, if the universities do not follow a policy which the public approves, they would very soon feel the consequences." Hofmeyr's comments emphasise again that Wits was not imagined as an ivory tower operating independently of white public opinion.

Further Hofmeyr's position as Minister of Education and his history with Wits arguably empowered Raikes defend the University's official decision despite public criticism regarding Vilakazi's appointment and Raikes' self-identification as a "progressive conservative."[238] Hofmeyr's identification of public opinion as a constraint on universities betrays an assumption of universities as implicitly progressive spaces. This impulse is an antecedent of the protest-only

[237] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 314.
[238] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 4.

narrative which eventually became a central part of Wits' public image, and is a useful example of how interpersonal relationships play a role in shaping institutional relationships in general and of Wits' publicness in particular.

It is telling that at this moment publicised racial controversy, Wits does not appear to have directly addressed Black newspapers. This lapse occurred despite at least one popular African language weekly, *The Bantu World,* discussing Vilakazi's appointment at some length. Using Warner's analysis of the social relationships of address and attention,[239] the lack of engagement with texts circulating about the University from the Wits community suggest that they saw this public as secondary or peripheral to its primary interests.

Vilakazi's appointment at the University also provides a rare moment for insight into the responses of a predominantly Black literary public to the University's actions. The *Bantu World,* a multilingual publication primarily targeting an educated, black African, urban elite,[240] recognised Vilakazi's appointment as a significant, but somewhat controversial moment in the history of the country.[241] His appointment happened a year before the passing of the Representation of Natives Act 16 of 1936, which removed voting rights from Black people in the Cape province. In this political context, Vilakazi's appointment was a significant achievement for Africans seeking equal rights and incorporation into the frameworks of the Union. Dumisani Ntshangase, in his biography of Vilakazi's life, uses Vilakazi's poetry as an indicator of his self-reflection on the significance of his appointment;

To serve my own beloved people-

[239] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 2002, 55.
[240] Cati Coe, "Histories of Empire, Nation, and City: Four Interpretations of the Empire Exhibition, Johannesburg, 1936," *Folklore Forum* 32, no. 1/2 (2001): 5. *The Bantu World* was a weekly newspaper founded in 1932 by Bertram F.G. Paver- a white ex-farmer and itinerant salesman- with the help of the liberal establishment (Switzer and Switzer 1979). In 1935 the British-owned Argus Company took it over. It had close ties to the mining industry and was one of the strongest presses in the country. 2500 copies were sold each week in 1935 and it had an estimated readership of 5700. The paper was a platform for the elite section of black society-the middle class who were educated in mission schools, urbanised, and working in professional jobs such as nursing and teaching. Each edition of *The Bantu* World was written in six languages: English, Afrikaans, SiXosa, SiZulu, SeSotho, and Sechuana.
[241] *The Bantu World* 06 April and 25 May 1935 cited in Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 8.

Aware of them always, I hear them cry:

"Take up our burden and be our voice!"[242]

Ntshangase's writing on Vilakazi's life suggests two distinct responses to his appointment and career at Wits from the Black literary publics, predominantly imagined through the readership of newspapers like the *Bantu World* belonging mainly to a growing Black professional class in and around Johannesburg.[243] The first one he highlights is the mixed reception his appointment received, including ridicule and disapproval (which he reciprocated) from some letter writers styling themselves as "African Graduates"[244]. This group saw Vilakazi as having attained a "candlelight" degree (via correspondence) without the 'proper' university pedagogical tool of lectures.[245] Other critics argued that Vilakazi's appointment at Wits was an act of political collaboration. They painted him as an Uncle Tom figure, blocking the progress of more politically active or radical Black Academics into white academic spaces.[246] Some among the emerging African urban middle class wrote letters to the editor in protest to Vilakazi's willingness to work with an institution which they saw as perpetuating the subjugation of Black people.[247]

The discussion in *Th Bantu World* around Vilkazi's appointment showed that critiques of Wits' admission and social segregation policies were present and articulated in certain realms of public discussion. These critiques, however, do not seem to have penetrated the consciousness of liberal debate within the University. Instead, the white publics which Wits primarily engaged with focused primarily on the relatively narrow issue of appropriate proximity to Black people without engaging meaningfully with the different views emerging within Black spaces of public discourse David Atwell's "Modernizing Tradition/ Traditionalizing Modernity: Reflections on the Dhlomo-

[242] Vilakazi's poem "Tell me, White man's son!" (Amal'ezulu) quote by Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 12.
[243] Les Switzer and Elizabeth Ceiriog Jones, "Other Voices: The Ambiguities of Resistance in South Africa's Resistance Press," *South African Historical Journal* 32 (May 1995): 73.
[244] Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 8. Although a graduate (of UNISA) prior to his appointment at Wits, Vilakazi felt socially and intellectually marginalised by the dominant group of African graduates who were also leading vernacular writers at the time and had predominantly studied at Forte Hare University.
[245] Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 8.
[246] Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 10.
[247] Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 7.

Vilakazi Dispute"[248] (2002) underlines that there was a diversity of opinion amongst Black writers in this period, although most research about Historically White Institutions does not reflect this. Even when moves were made to incorporate Black bodies into the Wits community, they remained on the periphery of the University's imagined audiences.

The second perspective evident in *The Bantu World* fits Vilakazi's reflections in the poem more closely. This view recognised Vilakazi as a "champion of the African underclass" who represented black Africans' potential to succeed despite class inequality and racism. A.P. Mda's 6 July 1946 articles in *UmAfrika,* captured a widespread sense of excitement about Vilakazi's D.Litt graduation. Mda lists at least seven contemporary newspapers across the linguistic spectrum covered Vilakazi's graduation at the Johannesburg City Hall.[249] Le Roux[250] and Ntshangase[251] present different perspectives on the extent to which Vilikazi's politics impacted his appointment at Wits. Vilikazi's prominent reputation both in his life and posthumously underscored his ability to straddle the tightly demarcated borders between what segregationist South Africa imagined as white and Black public spaces. Despite the discrimination that he experienced, Vilakazi was able to use Wits University as a tool for achieving his aims. Individuals like Vilikazi and the Black staff and students who followed him exercised both individual agency and a degree of public influence through their association with Wits University.

Further research and archival work about early Black narratives at Wits will enable a more nuanced understanding of Wits' 'open' years and the role that the institution has played in shaping various public conversations in South Africa. As Le Roux points out, "black authors have negotiated white power structures to reach their audience, through a complex act of confrontation, collaboration and even compromise."[252] By omitting the narratives of how Black

[248] In *Research in African Literatures,* 33, no. 1 (2002)*:* 94-119.
[249] Robert Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza, eds., *Africa's Cause Must Triumph: The Collected Writings of A.P. Mda*, African Lives (South Africa: Best Red, 2018), 144. Mda was a significant voice among Black intellectuals at the time, having played an influential role in the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944.
[250] Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," para. 30.
[251]Ntshangase, "Between the Lion and the Devil: The Life and Works of B.W. Vilakazi, 1906-1947," 10.
[252]Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," para. 56.

people used white power structures like Wits, the dominant "protest-only" narrative that open universities draw on denies the agency of the very people they claim to have championed.

iii. Black Authors & Subjects

In 1923, Wits established its Department of Bantu Studies. The Smuts government denied financial support for this new department, as it had already supported the establishment of UCT's "Department of African Life and Languages" in 1918.[253] Wits' Bantu Studies department was therefore dependent on funding from the Witwatersrand Council of Education, the Native Recruiting Corporation and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association. [254] These funding relationships helped to frame the study of "the Native Problem" [255] at Wits. Black South Africans were conceived primarily as subjects of study, or, more specifically a problem to be resolved, rather than active students or educators. J.D. Rheinhallt Jone's article "University of The People" indicates that "the courses in Zulu, native law and administration and ethnology" were a "recent innovation" within the Wits Law Faculty by 1923.[256] Rheinallt Jones describes these courses as "particularly helpful for those who are brought into touch with the native races."[257] This is a telling commentary from the secretary of the Witwatersrand Education Council. Elizabeth Le Roux, in her study of South Africa's university presses, notes that the content of the journal *Bantu Studies,* which focused on the research of Wits' Bantu Studies department, was largely instrumentalist in its ideological orientation towards knowledge about African people.[258]

The approach to black African culture and language as an instrumentalist tool for furthering the settler-colonial nation-building project of Union shows how the University mimicked the racialised social relations of the broader society. There is a strong sense in the "Our University" supplement that the solutions to Black problems would be discovered and delivered by white professionals. This professional involvement took the form of medical doctors, members of the Civil Service or scientific analysis by academics. Barnes (2019), drawing on Saul Dubow's "Race,

[253] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 137.
[254] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 137.
[255] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 137.
[256] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[257] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[258] Le Roux, *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: Between Complicity and Resistance*, 55–57.

Civilization and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourses in the Inter-War Years" (1987), argues that the white liberals in South Africa tended to think of South Africa as space where "Africans and whites lived in the same chronological moment but different social eras."[259] This notion of progress and development as a linear temporal process is part of the intellectual milieu which emboldened Wits' academics to frame Black experiences in South Africa as a move away from a static type of tradition towards the 'civilisation' of European/White enlightenment thinking. These intellectual arcs permeated not only socially constructed markers like language but also biological racial typologies and the discipline of paleoanthropology, which Wits became internationally renowned for through the work of academics like Dr Raymond Dart.[260] Examples like these demonstrate that Black participation at Wits under its policy of "academic non-discrimination" was limited in terms of access to the institution but also its paternalistic intellectual climate.

In a review of Vilakazi's *Inkondlo KaZulu* in *Bantu Studies,* J.D. Taylor articulated the envisioned role for the series as being to document "the best literary work of Bantu writers in their languages… available for their natural audiences, and so shall become a stimulus to intellectual and spiritual growth."[261] This notion of the "natural audience" and "intellectual and spiritual growth" align with Barnes' notions of temporal liberalism, as future-orientated project whereby Black people might one-day reach a level of equality with Whiteness. David Atwell's "Modernizing Traditions" article (2002) highlight that Doke's interests in developing African languages were linked both in paternalistic assumptions of the relationship between written cultures and development, as well as a process through which "the efficient performance of the white man's function in this country" could be realised.[262] Just because the intentions of white publishers and reviewers were couched in these paternalistic terms, does not mean that the Black authors who participated in the series did not recognise the unique opportunity that this platform provided for connecting to new literary audiences and commercial markets (particularly in the school-

[259] Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, 36.
[260] Raymond Dart played an important part in putting Wits University on the map of international science, after he discovered the Taung child. Kuljian, *Darwin's Hunch: Science, Race and the Search for Human Origins*, 40–45.
[261] Taylor, J. Dexter. "Inkondlo kaZulu: An Appreciation" *Bantu Studies.* 9:163 cited in Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," para. 14.
[262] Le Roux, *"Black Writers, White Publishers…"*, para. 11.

textbook arena). Together with Lovedale Press and Marianhill, Wits University Press, predominantly through Clement Doke as an agent, was able to recognise the intellectual work being done by the New African Movement, although this value was largely understood through parallels to English literary styles,[263] and stemmed from the instrumentalist and disciplining origins of Wits' study of "Bantu Ethnography" in the Department of Bantu Studies.[264]

Wits University Press (WUP) was established at the same time as the University, in 1922. It is South Africa's oldest university press, and its primary objective was to publish scholarly work, linked to the academic output of Wits academics.[265] In this sense, WUP played a significant role in asserting the University's role as a producer and circulator of knowledge. Given that WUP is still active and has been the primary publishing organ of the University for most of its history; works like Elizabeth Le Roux's *A social history of the university presses in apartheid South Africa: Between complicity and resistance* (2016) are important for tracing trends in Wits' production and publishing of different types of texts. This theme is picked up again in chapter six. The legacy of this series continues to be a point of pride in the University's self-identified public image. In 2007, Wits University Press' catalogue described the series as "First published by Wits University Press in the 1940s, [sic] the series provided a voice for the voiceless and celebrate African culture, history and heritage. It continues to contribute by supporting current efforts to empower and develop the status of African languages in South Africa."[266]

One direct way that Wits University addressed Black audiences in its early decades was through the "Bantu Treasury Series" (Later called the African Treasury Series), published by Wits University Press (WUP) and edited by Prof. C.M. Doke, who successfully recruited B.W. Vilakazi as the series' first author. Between 1935 and 1972, the series published approximately twenty titles by different authors writing in the vernacular in a variety of languages classified as "Bantu";

[263] Le Roux, *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: Between Complicity and Resistance*, 54.
[264] Clement M Doke, "Bantu Studies, Getting at the Natives' Mind, Rand as Firld for Research," *The Rand Daily Mail*, November 23, 1923, sec. Our University Supplement.
[265] Le Roux, *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: Between Complicity and Resistance*, 50.
[266] Wits University Press (2007) cited in Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," para. 47.

including isiZulu, isiXhosa, Kiswahili and Sesotho.[267] Doke's mission in convincing WUP to support the series was to stimulate interest in the study of African languages and what he saw as the creation of Bantu literature.[268] Other authors in the series included men who would go on to be associated with "the New African Movement",[269] as well as students and language assistants in Wits' Bantu Studies Department including C.L.S. Nyembezi, F.S.M. Mncube and S.M. Mofokeng.[270] While Taylor and Doke may have initially intended the Treasury Series to call into being a black African literary public of the authors' "natural" (linguist) audience, in practice the series gained its popularity through its commodification as school and university set workbooks. This meant its primary readerships were black schoolchildren and multiracial trainee teachers in an increasingly segregated education system.[271]

iv. Academic Integration with Social Segregation

Wits' policy of "academic integration with social segregation" appears to have been formally recognised by Council in the mid-1940s after Vice-Chancellor Raikes received a petition from a church group concerned about inter-racial sports on campus.[272] Phillip Tobias, a white Wits medical student in 1943 reflects on how, when Wits did eventually start admitting Black students it provided an alternative to the norms of South African white society in the 1940s. He fondly remembers his first encounters with "non-racialism" through interactions with classmates of different racial and ethnic backgrounds "both in the academic arena as well as on the tennis court."[273] He recalled that the University "nervously" adopted the "dreadful step backwards" to "academic non-segregation, but social segregation."[274] Tobias's description of the events echoes the idea that racial segregation was an external imposition onto the natural "non-racial" impulse of the University. Tobias's nostalgic reflection, however, does not account for the piecemeal

[267] Le Roux, Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers: A Case Study of the Bantu Treasury Series in South Africa," paras. 6 & 21.
[268] Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers…", para. 6.
[269] Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers…", para. 15.. A Black literary movement concerned with "the historical project of constructing modernity in South Africa Specifically James Ranisi Jolobe, Sol. T. Plaatje, and Nimrod Ndebele.
[270] Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers…", para. 6.
[271] Le Roux, "Black Writers, White Publishers…",para. 35.
[272] Tobias, *Into the Past: A Memoir*, 55–56; Murray, *Wits: The Open Years*, 47.
[273] Tobias, *Into the Past: A Memoir*, 55.
[274] Tobias, *Into the Past: A Memoir*, 55.

codes of social segregation which had begun on campus from at least 1935,[275] or Raikes' public view of the importance of white ascendency in developing South Africa.[276] Positive as Tobias' reflections are; the reflections of several Black students at Wits during a similar period suggest that the University was another one of the many spaces where they were 'othered' in everyday ways. Bruce Murray (2016)[277] and Neo Ramoupi's (2016)[278] journal articles detailing Nelson Mandela's experiences as one of Wits' first Black law students provide some insight into the impact racial discrimination on Wits' early Black students. These students were, for the most part, social elites within their off-campus communities and, for Mandela, Wits was his first jarring personal encounter with racism.

v. Conclusions

By exploring the experience of a few Black individuals at Wits in the pre-apartheid period, this chapter has demonstrated the limits of Wits' legacy as an inclusive public institution, restricted purely by the prejudices of white society. Many of the Black people who engaged with Wits - whether as prospective students or academic appointments – were pushed to the periphery of the community Wits' imagined in its role as "University of the People." Despite the marginalisation Black people at Wits faced, Wits' position as an institution of the white South African core public sphere did enable a small Black elite to access the professional, and some social benefits of a white, English-speaking university. Without the non-racial admissions clauses in Wits' charter, it is unlikely that the door toward unsegregated university education would have been nudged open in the first half of the twentieth century.

The scarcity of precise details about Wits' early Black students – where they came from, what they studied, and who they were – in mainstream histories of the institution poses two central problems for historians interested in the multifaceted roles projected onto public universities. Firstly, it risks generalising the experiences of Black communities (whether organised according to ethnic, linguistic or colour identities) into a homogenous "non-white" history of Wits. The few

[275] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 47. This included the establishment of a "non-European reading room" in the library.
[276] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 28.
[277] Bruce Murray, "Nelson Mandela and Wits University," *Journal of African History* 52, no. 2 (2016).
[278] Neo Lekgotla Laga Ramoupi, "'The Black Man in the White Man's Court': Mandela at Wits University, South Africa, 1943-1949," *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 39, no. 2 (2016): 163–96.

Black students and staff at Wits in this early period represent exceptions who were allowed to circumvent the dominant, racialised social imagination of Wits University. Studying how different racial categories, faculties and qualifications were mobilised in engagements with University academics and administrators, opens up the possibility of understanding an as yet un-articulated organising logic that governed the perceived public roles and responsibilities of Wits in this early period. Further research in this area would assist in developing the critique of the "protest-only" narrative presented by authors like Teresa Barnes through the lens of publicness. Secondly, the scarcity highlights how despite both people of colour and women now being demographic majorities within the Wits student body; their histories and narratives continue to exist on the periphery of reflections about the University's past.

Chapter 2 and 3 have both shown that from its earliest days, Wits began to differentiate itself from other white universities as a home for progressive liberalism in South Africa. This happened through an emphasis on the work of individual members of the University; such as MacMillan, Hofmeyr, Raikes and Doke, who championed varying levels of non-racialism in the institution. The need for a range of liberal positions stemmed from an apparent consensus that respectable academics should support the *universal* characteristic of university education while remaining cognizant of white public opinion. As a result, the University put significant effort into moderating this open-minded approach through caveats that accommodated segregationist, white supremacist ideas and practices. In this chapter these practices are demonstrated by the debates, petitions and faculty policies related to clinical training and restricting the powers of Black academic staff.

In weighing up the various publics which Wits sought to engage through the appointment of B.W. Vilikazi, the bias towards white conservative attitudes is evident and further reinforced by the critiques from some portions of the Black press who painted Vilakazi as a sell-out rather than a pioneer for his association in a junior position with Wits. Wits saw itself as operating within the limits of the white public sphere, even when its norms ran counter to the institution's stated objectives. In terms of perceptions of the public roles and responsibilities of the University, the 1920s and 1930s clearly show that Wits, through its Council and sub-committees, attempted to ingratiate itself into the mainstream of white, South African public discourses. Part of this process

included communicating both internally, and externally, that while the University Charter enshrined racial equality, this element of Wits' institutional culture was subject to interpretation and compromise. While the University did play a role in providing some experience of inter-racial interactions, which differed from the status quo of South African society at the time, these interactions were by no means free from discrimination or the pervasiveness of white supremacy. Although Wits, through the University Press, recognised members of a Black literary public and addressed their readers through the Treasury series, the University seems not to have seen engaging with this counter-public as part of its roles and responsibilities. Despite the active debates relating to Vilakazi's appointment, Wits orientated its public responses towards the concerns of a white public sphere, at the expense of engaging, or even actively recognising, the vibrant Black counterpublic engaging with the same University-related 'texts' in very different ways.

The examples explored in this chapter suggest that the initial expectation of the University's role concerning Black South Africans was to provide professionalised skills for the 'management' of Johannesburg's Black population through medical and civil services. It is only when external conditions (i.e. the Second World War and a shortage of Black professionals) shifted the demand for skills-training that any significant demographic changes happened. Reckoning with this early history of the University is a crucial counter-narrative to the primarily celebratory and oppositional myth of Wits as having segregation externally imposed on the institution. The experiences of uncertainty and exclusion that Black students and staff at Wits encountered, and the underrating of these through an uncritical 'open university' argument, demonstrate that for every individual or group within the University who tried to include Black people as part of the University community there were, in the early years, a majority of influential individuals and groups who sought to maintain the positions of Black people as peripheral university members..

Besides providing a counter-narrative to the inherently racist 'opposition-only' narrative of Wits, this focus on the 1920s and 1930s also show how key decision-makers at Wits influenced thinking about what a university should do, and whom it should serve. There is a definite sense from the Loram Commission submission that the institutional label of "university" should be imagined as part of a Western, Anglophone- universal model and that measures that would diminish the

international recognition of South African academia should be avoided. Using Warner's framework, Wits produced discursive texts at each of these moments, which constituted a public that responded to these texts with particular expectations of the University. This public was racialised, and largely ignored the criticisms of the University that emerged from a Black counterpublic. Finally, this chapter also demonstrates that the publicness of the institution is not something that is set simply by policy positions or statutes. It is a process where individuals who can navigate the institutional structures, interact, build relationship and compromise with others. These individual ideas and actions both generate new forms of institutional identity and are shaped by pre-existing mandates.

Chapter 4:
Contesting Academic Freedom

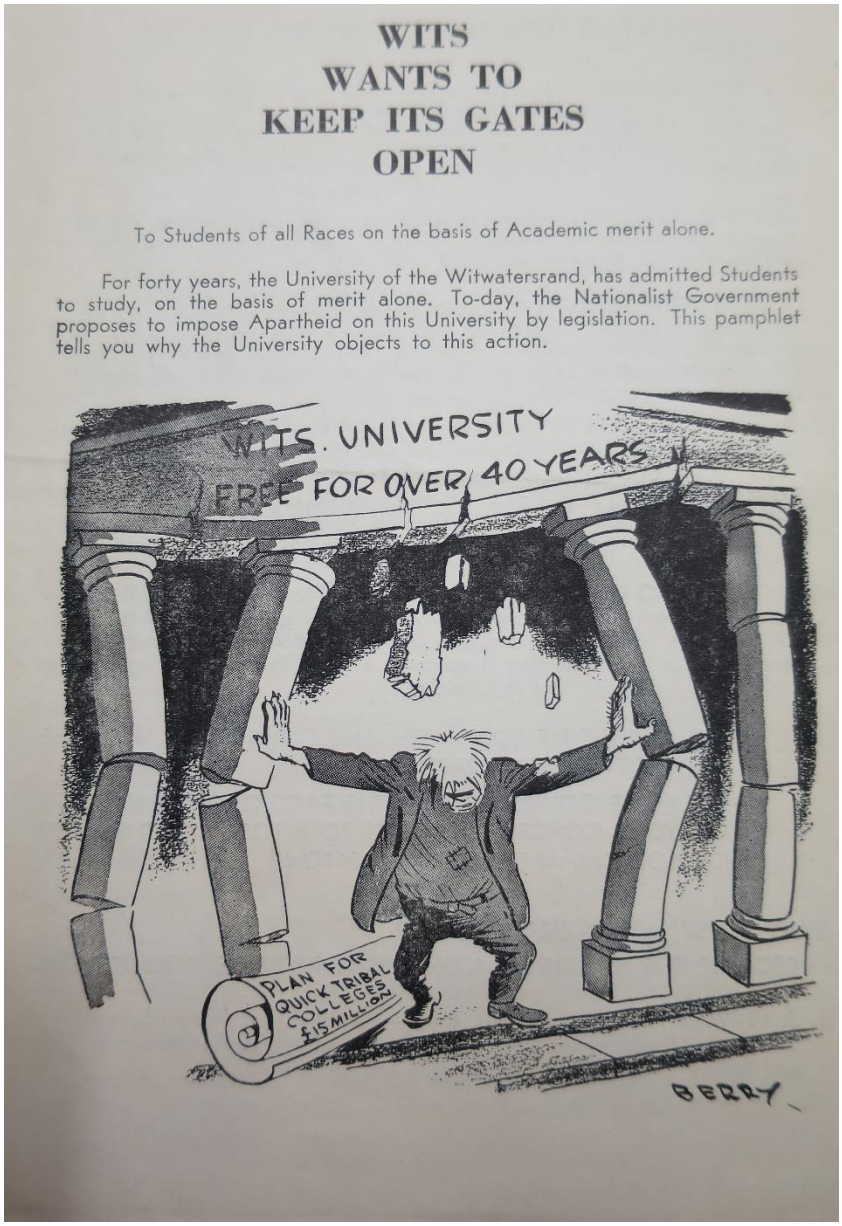


Image 5: Berry cartoon on a pamphlete intended to mobilise support against the Extension of Univeristy Education Act, 1929. Wits Central Records.

4. Contesting Academic Freedom

Academic Freedom is a concept that underpins the imagination of universities as independent, objective and scientific institutions. The perceived independence is central to the view of universities as producers of unbiased, truthful and socially useful knowledge, trusted by society as "guardians of the rational spirit of modernity."[279] The value of this perceived objectivity and rationality arguably increases under oppressive regimes like Apartheid. This chapter examines how Academic Freedom as a concept developed at Wits University through the protests against the state's Extension of University Education Act of 1959. These protests, which began in the mid-1950s, have played a critical role in perceptions of Wits' public role because of their association with the 'open' university label. Despite the limits of this 'open' identity, Wits was a core site of opposition against the 1959 Act. This chapter explores the modes of public address that different constituencies at Wits utilised during this period that has shaped imaginations of the University's public roles and responsibilities.

The 1950s protests in defence of the idea of 'open' universities were foundational in the conceptualisation of Academic Freedom in South Africa. Wits, in close collaboration with the University of Cape Town (UCT), led a campaign to defend the "tradition of the liberal university in South Africa" from intensifying state positions in favour of "University Apartheid."[280] This chapter unpacks how critical events in the Academic Freedom campaign shaped ideas about the public roles of Wits University. It does this by reviewing key characteristics of Academic Freedom in South Africa followed by an analysis of the core forms of protest used by members of the Wits Community.

i. Contextualising the Academic Freedom Debates

The local and international literature on Academic Freedom is vast, with new debates continuing to unfold in many parts of the world. In South Africa, the literature on Academic Freedom tends to focus on the experiences of academic institutions under Apartheid. It predominantly describes

[279] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 20.
[280] Conference of representatives of the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, *The Open Universities in South Africa*, 4.

how institutions operated under Apartheid or examine the legacy of Apartheid policy on contemporary educational inequality.

Much of the relevant literature on this topic has been written post-1994 and seeks to understand the history of Academic Freedom as a concept, in order to continue debating the nature of Academic Freedom in a democratic society. This is in part because of the long-lasting legacy of apartheid in education and because the 1996 democratic constitution explicitly protects Academic Freedom. This thesis has drawn on contributions to the debate from John Higgins, Andre Du Toit, Charles Robinson and Charles R.M. Dlamini, and others, as well as continuing research by the Council for Higher Education.[281]

Andre du Toit (2000) and John Higgins (2000) argue that Academic Freedom was a concept which the apartheid state did commit itself to – if only rhetorically.[282] Du Toit shows that claims of defending Academic Freedom have been made from a variety of political and ideological positions both during and after Apartheid. These included liberal support for institutional autonomy by "open universities", the discourse of separate development used by the National Party, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE)'s idea of "progressive", accountable public universities, and understandings of academic freedom as being fundamentally linked to free speech[283]

This literature review focuses on analysis of the state of Academic Freedom under Apartheid, until the mid-1970s. The International Academic Boycott of South Africa is not included in this chapter because its impact was felt mainly from the mid-1970s onwards, and its influence on Academic Freedom exceeds the scope of this thesis.[284]

[281] Charles Robinson Mandlenkosi Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa." (University of South Africa, 1996), 3.
[282] Andre Du Toit, "From Autonomy to Accountability: Academic Freedom under Threat in South Africa?," *Social Dynamics* 26, no. 1 (2000): 76.
[283] Du Toit, "From Autonomy to Accountability…" 77.
[284] Lorraine J. Haricombe, *Out in the Cold: Academic Boycotts and the Isolation of South Africa* (Arlington, VA: Information Resources Press, 1995). Provides a useful context for understanding the debates linking Academic Freedom and the Academic Boycott which are beyond the scope of this chapter.

One of the early and most referenced definitions of Academic Freedom in the South Africa context comes from former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Professor T.B. Davie. In 1953, speaking at a Wits graduation ceremony, Davie outlined the "four essential freedoms" of Academic Freedom.[285] He argued universities should be able "to determine for [themselves] on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study."[286] Davie's definition of Academic Freedom emphasised: "academic self-rule" that prioritised the intellectual authority of academics over senior university administrators,[287] and - as the academic freedom protests in the 1950s emphasised - the state. However, Steven Friedman and Omano Edigheji (2006) argue that T.B. Davie's formulation of Academic Freedom, if taken as an absolute, could lead to an abuse of power by those enabled to act on behalf of the university.[288] In the 1970s, the South African state articulated concerns about an omnipotent university, but the bulk of the South African literature about Academic Freedom does implicitly concede that university authorities should set limits to these powers. This trend suggests a high level of social trust in the independence and objectivity of the liberal university.[289] The pervasiveness of this social trust is part of the context wherein Wits has been able to create and maintain a public image of the institution as a bastion for non-discrimination and protest against oppression.

In the 1977 edited collection, *The Future of the University in Southern Africa,* America sociologist Edward Shils located the idea of an independent and objective university as key to the modern "Academic Ethos." Shils situated Academic Freedom as a product of European universities' moves to distance themselves from direct governance by the state and/or church from the mid-nineteenth onwards.[290] By distinguishing the university as autonomous, Shils argued that

[285] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 306.
[286] T.B. Davies, cited in Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years,* 306.
[287] Du Toit, "From Autonomy to Accountability: Academic Freedom under Threat in South Africa?," 88.
[288] Steven Friedman and Omano Edigheji, "Eternal (and Internal) Tensions? Conceptualising Public Accountability in South African Higher Education.," CHE Task Team on South African Government Involvement in, and Regulation of, Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom (HEIAAF) (Pretoria, 2006), 4, http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/CHE_HEIAAF_No.2_Dec2006.pdf.
[289] André Du Toit, "Critic and Citizen: The Intellectual, Transformation and Academic Freedom," *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 93, https://doi.org/10.1080/713692703.
[290] Edward Shils, "The Academic Ethos," in *The Future of the University in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1977), 16.

academics could pursue knowledge and truth 'objectively' (according to their standards and expectations).[291] Secondly, university members became protected from censure in the pursuit of truth. Du Toit's *Critic and Citizen* (2000) convincingly problematises the perception of "the intellectual" as the (handmaiden) of universal, representative truth by drawing on Foucault's "regimes of truth."[292] In the Wits context, the earliest example of the limitations of this imagined political objectivity was arguably the strong anti-socialist impulse demonstrated through attitudes towards academics like W.D. MacMillian and Margaret Ballinger in the 1920s and 1930s.[293] Later in the context of the Cold War, liberal white South African notions of Academic Freedom, with their emphasis on institutional autonomy and individual freedoms, sought to maintain a historical relationship with a pro-democracy, pro-Capitalist Anglo-American Academic public.

Charles Dlamini's PhD, written in the early 1990s, argues that institutional autonomy provides members of the university with a degree of protection that they required to effectively discharge their public roles in society.[294] Central to this argument is the recognition that many advances or innovations in knowledge and technology disrupt the status quo. In order for active critique and new debates not to be shut down by the inertia and dominance of hegemonic social norms, these disruptions require the institutional autonomy that Academic Freedom promises.[295] Dlamini observes that "the majority [in a democracy] may often be wrong because truth is not a monopoly of the majority."[296] This argument surfaces the tension between two of Wits' perceived functions.

On the one hand there is the expectation for Wits to be a "University for the People", responding to the needs and interests of a broader public. At the same time, in order to produce the socially

[291] Shils, "The Academic Ethos," 16.
[292] Du Toit, "Critic and Citizen: The Intellectual, Transformation and Academic Freedom," 93. In this conceptualisation Foucault argues that the mechanisms through which society distinguishes between the true and untrue, are not outside of subjective power relations even if they are presented as objective fact.
[293] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 129–31 & 332. Both W.D. Macmillian and Margaret Ballinger (nee' Hodgson) taught in the History Department prior to World War II, were considered politically radical for their time and received varying degrees of censur from Raikes and the University Council.
[294] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa.," 29 & 224; Du Toit, "From Autonomy to Accountability: Academic Freedom under Threat in South Africa?," 102.
[295] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 42.
[296] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa,"42.

useful, expert knowledge demanded of the University, the institution needs a degree of protection from the publics it is imagined to be serving. The idea of non-academic interests as a threat to the intellectual work of the university, reinforces a simplistic view of intellectuals as inherently socially benevolent that Du Toit (2000) challenges.

In keeping with the liberal ideology expressed in his work, Shils grounds his argument against Apartheid restrictions on Academic Freedom in the political discourse of civil liberties, rather than economic reform. He questions whether Academic Freedom on campuses can survive as a universal, independent concept in societies whose attitudes towards civil liberties and individual freedoms do not align with liberal democratic values. [297] The 1972 Van Wyk de Vries Commission of Enquiry answered this question in the negative. The Commission viewed university autonomy and academic freedoms as limited by the laws and political will of the nation-state. The Commission's report, examined in chapter five, outlines some of the ways that tensions between this imagined universal and the Nationalist project were articulated in South Africa.

Conservative National Party supporters were not the only critics of the 'open' universities' official conceptualisation of Academic Freedom as Institutional Autonomy. From a left perspective, some staff and the Wits Student Representative Council highlighted the irony of Wits' claims as a premier institution of white liberalism in South Africa, when its' primary opposition to the Separate Universities Act was grounded in an argument against state-intervention rather than against racial discrimination. Overall, however, pieces like Mandela's "Bantu Education goes to University" suggest that criticism of the 'open' universities protests from other anti-apartheid organisation was relatively limited. [298] Despite first-hand experience of the limitations of Wits' publicness, Mandela still advocated for "a broad united front of all the genuine opponents of the racial policies of the Government." [299]

As previously discussed, identifying who acts as or represents 'the University' is a complicated task. The debates and actions around Academic Freedom at Wits by different and shifting internal constituencies provide insight into two core elements of the University's publicness.

[297] Shils, "The Academic Ethos," 17.
[298] Nelson Mandela, "Bantu Education Goes to University," *Liberation*, 1957, 10.
[299] Mandela, "Bantu Education Goes to University," 10.

Firstly, they demonstrate how intra-institutional discourse is both selective and hierarchical in terms of the voices it chooses to amplify or silence in its engagements with imagined publics and external communities. Secondly, the Academic Freedom protests in the mid-1950s illuminated how particular acts of protests and public engagement draw on and affirm the public image of the University as a legitimate, dignified source of intellectual, moral and social knowledge.

Before expanding on theoretical conceptualisations of Academic Freedom, this chapter turns to a discussion of the post-1948 higher education context and the Academic Freedom campaigns at Wits in the late 1950s.

ii. Apartheid & Academic freedom: The Eiselen and Holloway Commissions, 1949-1953

After its electoral victory in 1948, the National Party quickly consolidated its apartheid agenda, issuing a series of legislative acts that consolidated segregation in every aspect of South African life. Thus, while the growth of twentieth-century capitalism resulted in greater interaction between Black and white people in workplaces and cities, social, residential and economic segregation deepened to protect the ruling white minority from the prospect of equal citizenship for Black South Africans. Education was no exception to this trend. The apartheid government set up two commissions of enquiry into education which contributed significantly to later discussions about Academic Freedom at universities. These were the Eiselen Commission on Native Education (1949-1951) and the Holloway Commission on Separate Training Facilities for Non-Europeans at Universities (1953-1955).

The Eiselen Commission was key to the formalisation of Bantu Education as a segregated and subordinate system of education, and it set a precedent of limiting Academic Freedom by tightening restrictions on Black students' abilities to register at institutions classified as white.[300] The Bantu Education Act of 1953 was a direct outcome of this commission and enabled the Department of Native Affairs (rather than Education) to administer all African primary and secondary schooling.[301] The Holloway Commission was established in 1953 to investigate the financial feasibility of establishing racially segregated higher education training facilities. It

[300] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 20.
[301] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 20.

ultimately advised against racially segregated facilities, because of the financial burden on the state. According to the Holloway Commission, academic segregation was especially impractical at a post-graduate level.[302] The Commission did not oppose the spirit of separate development and argued for segregated undergraduate studies by concentrating all "Black" and "Indian" students at Fort Hare and Natal Universities, with "Coloured" and "Chinese" students and those qualifying for postgraduate studies allowed to attend 'open' universities in small numbers.[303] Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom ultimately exceeded the recommendations of the Commission by introducing the Separate Universities Bill to parliament in 1956.[304] The Holloway Commission recommended a shift from the state as a secondary source of funding for universities, to one where the state was responsible for "the major part of the revenue required to maintain satisfactory minimum standards of university education."[305] At each institution student fees, endowment income and donations funded projects beyond these minimum requirements.[306]

The Holloway Commission recognised and endorsed Academic Freedom at existing universities, even though it did not attempt to defend integrated educational institutions in any ideological sense. The Commission concluded that limitations on academic freedom should happen "only with the utmost circumspection and in the most serious circumstances."[307] Nuclear research, with its high potential for physical (rather than intellectual or ideological) danger, was one example that justified limiting research freedoms. Wits' submissions to the Holloway Commission in April 1954 demonstrated a notable shift from its 1928 submission to the Loram Commission of Enquiry. The 1954 submission argued that "Wits strongly opposed both separate facilities within the University and segregated institutions."[308] However, at the same time, it also explicitly promoted Wits' inherently contradictory policy of academic integration with social segregation.[309] Rather than emphasise the benefits of integrated education, the University's based its primary objections to academic segregation on the belief that an equivalent standard

[302] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 144.
[303] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa.," 156.
[304] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 291.
[305] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*, 42.
[306] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*, 42.
[307] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 303.
[308] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 22.
[309] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 22.

of training and education was not a reasonable expectation at parallel institutions. Wits' submission argued that this unequal standard would compromise the reputations of all South African universities. Thus, both the state and the open universities drew on the Holloway Commission to support their arguments about the Extension of Universities Act.[310]

The Holloway Commission also differentiated between Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy. It described Academic Freedom as "the freedom to communicate acquired knowledge to others." This freedom of communication included "knowledge but also hypotheses"[311] which enabled "research workers and thinkers" to cooperate in the advancement of knowledge for its useful application and its utilisation by "mankind."[312] These statements from the Commission reiterate the imagined role of the University as an authoritative institution for the generation and legitimisation of knowledge in society. The Holloway Commission also highlighted that "the only way to show that a view is wrong, is to answer it by refutation and not to stifle it by authority imposed from above."[313] These insights into the logic of the developing apartheid state show that some of its organs still viewed universities as crucial sites of knowledge production, despite having politically different notions of progress and development.

Academic Freedom on South African campuses was not only affected by legislation which targeted the education system. The powers of surveillance and suppression employed by the Nationalist government also affected universities, albeit unevenly. Beyond measures to limit university autonomy, Murray (1972 and 1995) and Le Roux (2016), as well as numerous memoirs by past student and staff members at Wits, list actions taken under the Suppression of Communism Act (1950) the Riotous Assemblies Act (1956) and the Terrorism Act (1967) which significantly impacted on and limited Academic Freedom.[314] These measures included arbitrary detentions, political banning, censorship of publications, the criminalisation of the right to assemble, to teach, to be present at an educational institution as well as the control of

[310] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 156–59.
[311] Holloway Commission, cited in Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 157.
[312] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 157.
[313] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 158.
[314] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 236. Demonstrates that this did specifically target educational institutions

international travel over citizens and potentially dissenting international visitors.[315] As early as March 1957, the 'Student Opinion' section of the *Wits Student* included a detailed list of government's attacks on academic freedom beyond the scope of the proposed Separate Universities Bill.[316]

Restrictions on freedom of speech, movement and assembly were not limited to academic staff and students. However, universities, including Wits, were often the sites of state intervention. Universities were explicitly targeted by police presence on campuses, harassment of students and the recruiting of spies from the ranks of students, academic staff and committees of student organisations. These conditions encouraged a sense of fear of legal censure and physical harm, which arguably lead to a degree of self-censorship, particularly in research areas that might criticise the state. The degree and severity of state repression intensified as Apartheid shifted through various phases of political crisis, increasing dramatically after the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre. The type of state incursions mentioned above created both physical and intellectual barriers to dissent. This chapter argues that differences in universities' publicness enabled this repression to operate differently across various campuses.

iii. The Extension of Universities Act, 1959

Wits University first registered its formal opposition to the proposed Separate Universities Education Bill legislation via a telegram from the Registrar of the University to the Ministry of Arts, Education and Science on 14 March 1957. The Separate Universities Education Bill was the forerunner of the euphemistically named Extension of Universities Act, that was eventually passed in 1959. The proposed act elicited heated debate in parliament and the media, as well as protests from universities and civil society organisations. The Act's primary impact on Wits was that it legally restricted Black admissions to those who received special permission from the Minister. Further, it increased the Minister's existing influence on staff appointments.

The Act also mandated the creation of new racial-ethnic universities. These institutions were supposedly intended to accommodate black African, Coloured and Indian students' education at

[315] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 236.
[316] "No Compromise," *Wits Student*, March 1957, IX edition, 2.

a level that was "separate but equal." The government imagined these segregated institutions as extending access to university education. The drafters of the legislation argued: *"*The necessity of maintaining ethnic ties in university institutions flows from the conviction that the future leader during his training, including his university training, must remain in close touch with the habits, ways of life and views of members of his population group."[317] Advocates of the Act argued that it was a mechanism to enhance Academic Freedom and university accountability, by creating "fuller freedom for each university in its own context [and] the life of its own nation and as an important step on the road to increasing self-determination."[318] Quotes like these show how the state drew on already established ideas about the public roles of universities, and the need for a degree of academic freedom, to inform its arguments.

Before the telegram from the Registrar, the Wits SRC held a General Meeting of students in May 1956 to discuss the proposed policy. The meeting voted 614 to 15 to support protests against the intended implementation of University Apartheid and for maintaining a policy of academic non-segregation.[319] From this meeting the newly-elected SRC was mandated to "unite diverse constituencies" within the University and initiate a national campaign to unite "national opinion", against University Apartheid.[320] These two objectives would require different forms of public engagement. In September 1956 the SRC planned an hour-long class boycott. Acting principal Prof. I.D. MacCrone used executive power to veto the SRC's call for protest, threatening disciplinary action against the SRC. Seventy academic staff signed a petition in support of the boycott following MacCrone's veto. Some academics also cancelled classes in solidarity with the students.

Despite vetoing the student protests, MacCrone expressed that he was "by no means unsympathetic to the students."[321] The University's executive saw it necessary follow official channels of dispute resolution and thus preferred to distance itself from positions which might compromise its' relationship with the government. He was also "strongly averse" to any project

[317] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 160.
[318]Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 38.
[319] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 303.
[320] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 304.
[321] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 304.

which might disrupt the academic business of the University.[322] Two days later, on 16 September, six hundred 'ad hoc' students (not constrained by the SRC's disciplinary code) hosted a one-hour class-boycott. Approximately one-thousand students attended a mass meeting on the steps of the Wits main block during the boycott. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that this mass meeting degenerated into a "noisy farce,"[323] with a group of students attending the meeting being highly disruptive and shouting down the speaker, Rev. Ambrose Reeves. This suggests that despite the vast majority of students who had voted to oppose the legislation at the previous meeting, there were Wits students who did not support challenging the state's University Apartheid policy.

Both the students' call for the boycott and the acting principal's decision to veto what was mostly a symbolic act of protest, emphasised the primacy given to the academic function of the University. MacCrone's justification for his veto illustrates that different constituents of the University had different experiences of the University's publicness (in this case the students vis-à-vis university management). It confirms that the University's public image was not "simply the behaviour and ideas of individuals,"[324] but that at times the public expectations of the University *qua* institution constrained the decisions that individual members of the University might make independent of their responsibilities as office bearers. This is perhaps best illustrated by MacCrone reportedly being one of the first staff members to sign the petition in support of the 16 September boycott.[325] The 1956 boycott is illustrative of how the boundaries of acceptable behaviour at the University, depended not only the arguments put forward but who articulated particular positions, the office they represented and the forums that they utilised.

1. The Government's Position

Minister J.H. Viljoen, then Minister of Arts, Education and Science, provided three primary motivations for the Bill at its second reading and debate in Parliament on 27 May 1957. The first was that by enabling inter-racial contact and intellectual exchange, 'open' universities became a "seed-bed" for Black dissidents, promoting "the crooked development of the Non-European to

[322] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 304.
[323] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 304.
[324] Heribert Adam, "Predicaments and Options of Critical Intellectuals at South African Universities," in *The Future of the University in Southern African* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1977), 272.
[325] F.S. McNeilly, "A Lecturer's Reflections on 'September 19th,'" *Wits Student*, March 1957, 1 edition.

the detriment of all."[326] This argument was deeply grounded in the ethos of Bantu Education[327] and the state's goal of producing citizens who would comply with separate development policies. National Party MP, Albert Hertzog, noted that "the two universities of Cape Town and Johannesburg, are making enemies for the White man. Nowhere are more dangerous enemies produced than by these universities."[328] There is relatively little evidence to support Hertzog's accusations. Black students at 'open' universities were a small minority, and aside from some notable exceptions, like Neville Alexander at UCT and Eduardo Modlane at Wits,[329] serious Black anti-segregation opposition tended to emerge at historically black institutions like the University College of Fort Hare.

Secondly, the government argued that the 1959 Act would "save" the open universities from the risk being "overrun" by Black students. This was a critique of 'open' universities' management's abilities to discipline what the state saw as radical students. The government's primary concern seemed to be that the 'open' universities would forsake the "European" culture that both conservative and liberal whites considered necessary for the progress and success of South Africa.[330] This fear persisted despite Principal Sutton's reassurance of the political will to maintain "the European ethos of [the] University", without government intervention.[331] Minister Viljoen further argued that the status quo of "academic non-segregation and social segregation" at 'open' universities meant that the act would have little real impact on the everyday experience of these universities.[332]

[326] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 291.
[327] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 20.
[328] Hertzog cited in Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 292.
[329] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 8. Eduardo Modlane, a Mozambican student at Wits in the Social Sciences, was unable to complete his degree when the Nationalist Government refused to renew his study permit in 1949. Modlane later became the first president of FRELIMO and identified his expulsion from South Africa as a politically radicalizing moment.
[330] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*," 292.
[331] Sutton cited in Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*," 298. "the University could not face a situation, under present conditions, where a considerable number of European applicants of desirable quality would have to be turned away, to allow of places being allotted to an increasing number of non-Europeans."
[332] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 153.In 1957 there were only 300 Black students at Wits and UCT, only 4% (relative to 12% at UCT) were non-white students, and some faculties, like dentistry were still academically segregated.

In the 1940s, demographically, Black students constituted a negligible proportion of the Wits student body and the social impact of Wits' limited racial diversity is complicated to evaluate. Several Wits students from the period describe Wits as their first point of meaningful interracial interaction. Overall these reflections are generally positive, although some accounts are quite romanticised[333] and overshadow the explicit racism and discrimination that Black students did experience from some students and staff.[334] After the passing of the 1959 Act, Wits played less of a role as a meeting ground for students of different races and political orientations, but little else appears to have changed in the day-to-day functions of the University. Legally, the Minister had the power to prescribe courses and restructure faculties and departments,[335] but there is no clear record of this having happened at Wits. Conversely, the historically Black University College of Fort Hare and ethnic-institutions established after 1959 faced significant interventions regarding both university governance and curricula.[336]

Thirdly, Viljoen argued that educational segregation empowered Black elites to receive appropriate training "in their own sphere and in their own way."[337] Much more than the Viljoen's first two points, this argument, which grounded the rhetoric of separate development as "separate but equal", would have appealed to what Teresa Barnes labels "spatial liberals." In creating the Homelands, the National Party sought to further institutionalise the racialised nature of the South African public sphere by designating citizens within ethnic and racialised nations. To uphold the illusion of separate but equal, the Homelands needed 'independent' institutions for public deliberation and decision making, in addition to spatial boundaries. Ethnic-universities thus were imagined both as sites of skill production, providing "educational opportunities for a sufficient number of deserving Bantu for posts in service of their community that are essential to

[333] Tobias, *Into the Past: A Memoir*, 70.
[334] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 10; Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 6.
[335] W.M. Kgware, "The Role of Black Universities in South Africa," in *The Future of the University in Southern Africa*, ed. H.W. and Welsh van der Merwe David (Cape Town: David Philip, 1977), 230.
[336] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 202.These included the imposition of all-white governing councils, the implementation of disempowered parallel Black council and senate bodies and well as strict control over the academic offerings at these institutions.
[337] Viljoen quoted in Murray, *Wits The 'Open' Years*., 292.

fill",[338] as well as core institutions of these segregated public spheres. The qualifications and curricula of the ethnic-universities established after 1959, focused on producing resources for teaching and bureaucratic services, rather the more intellectually sophisticated subjects like Arts and Sciences that were associated with Wits' development into a University from a University College or Technical School.

2. The Open Universities and their protests:

The proposed Separate Universities Education legislation led to the first and perhaps most unified public protests in the history of Wits University. Building in intensity over two years, the University's "solemn protest" against it culminated in two significant events and included a series of smaller acts of resistance. The two main events were the 1957 march to the City Hall and first General Assembly of the University in April 1959.[339] These events echoed the 1916 public meeting in that they were explicit attempts by the University to influence broader public opinion. The particular forms of protest discussed in this chapter drew on existing public expectations of the 'open' universities. The collaborative approach by UCT and Wits also served to deepen the imagined-differences between liberal-English speakers and conservative Afrikaners. Rhodes University's, despite explicitly differentiating between non-racialism institutional autonomy, later identified as an 'open' university, illustrating the strength of this imagined community along linguistic lines.[340]

a. The Academic Freedom Committee

The "Academic Freedom Committee" was established by the outgoing SRC, at a mass meeting of around 1 300 students held on 13 September 1956. Its mandate was to "politicise students against university apartheid."[341] The SRC committee represented a different type of mobilisation to the Council subcommittee, chaired by I.D. MacCrone. The students' Academic Freedom Committee realised early on that smaller faculty- or residence-based discussion groups were more effective as a tool for politicisation than large mass meetings because they stood less

[338] Viljoen quoted in Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 293.
[339] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 374.
[340] Paul Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History.* (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 2017), 4.
[341] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 305.

chance of being disrupted by political rivals.[342] The discussion groups did not operate in isolation from larger events such as exhibitions, symposiums and public lectures, but the students realised that different audiences required different forms of text and address to achieve similar outcomes.

The staff-headed University Liaison Committee was the official University representative to the government and formal staff structures and colleagues at other universities. Bruce Murray makes two observations about this Liaison Committee, which are essential for understanding how its publicness carried different expectations in comparison with its student counterpart, both within and outside the university. Firstly, the University Liaison Committee's mandate was "[u]niting the University against the Bill and thereby of forming the solid basis for the magnificent national and international support received."[343] Secondly, "those on Council and on the academic staff who urged a principled stand held few illusions about their ability to force the government to retreat."[344] Prof. J.S. Marais, Chairman of the Open Universities Liaison Committee, conceded that there was no prospect of victory, but the principle could not be allowed to go by default."[345]

Both the official University Liaison Committee and the students' Academic Freedom Committee were established with a shared mandate (unifying national opposition against the Bill) and targeted internal and external audiences in their activities. Despite these similarities, the committees utilised different tactics and modes of protest. Whether by design or not, this resulted in a multipronged approach that appealed to a range of constituencies. The Wits committees were particularly concerned with reaching white communities whose interests the all-white parliamentarians debating the Bill might consider. By diversifying their target audiences and aligning their core missions, these two committees increased their collective impact, focusing on groups where they would have a comparative advantage. This allowed for a broad church of political and ideological positions on what Academic Freedom in a South African context meant,

[342] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 315.; Canteenus, "Overheard," *Wits Student*, May 19, 1958, 6 edition.
[343] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 311.
[344] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 306.
[345] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 306.

without diluting the political and social influence of the imagined homogeneity of "The University."

Michael Warner understands "publics" as "the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse."[346] Both committees, convened different, but related publics, that were considered legitimate participants in a mainstream, white, South African public sphere. The University Liaison Committee, through the socio-political networks associated with Wits' position as part of Johannesburg's core public sphere, addressed and reached an audience with greater social and political influence than its student counterpart. The parliamentary debates and ministerial deputations which the Liaison Committee's work enabled tended to limit their reflections on Academic Freedom to legalistic interpretations about the tensions between institutional autonomy and national responsibility. The conservative political leanings of some of the University's 'liberal' supporters, as well as Wits' reliance on state funds, limited the extent to which Academic Freedom was discussed outside of the scope of education specifically.

In contrast, the educational talks and campaigns organised by the SRC's Academic Freedom Committee, strongly influenced by NUSAS, enabled a different form of reflexivity around the qualitative value of Academic Freedom in South Africa. Ultimately the latter cultivated a group whose engagements with Academic Freedom led to a deeper critique of injustice in society more broadly. Juxtaposed with the University Liaison Committee's acknowledgement of the primarily symbolic nature of its opposition against the Bill, the work of the SRC's Academic Freedom Committee reflected a different internal understanding of the public expectations of the University.

b. The Open Universities in South Africa Booklet

Wits University management hoped to leverage the institution's social capital and public influence to oppose the Bill through constitutional and legislative procedures, without incurring additional penalties from the state.[347] To present a united front on the nature of universities'

[346] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 2002, 90.
[347] University of the Witwatersrand, "Papers Relating to the Interview between the University's Council's Deputation and the Hon. The Minister of Education, Arts and Science on 1st April 1957 on the Matter of the Separate University Education Bill," 1957, 1–12.

opposition, members of councils and senior academics from both UCT and Wits met in Cape Town in from 9-11 January 1957 to present and discuss essays about the nature of the university and Academic freedom. The result was a "reasoned" joint statement published as a booklet, *The Open Universities in South Africa.*[348] The publication was circulated to all South African parliamentarians, all universities in the British Commonwealth, Commonwealth governments, the President of the United States of America as well as several international academics.[349] It detailed Wits and UCT's vision for South African universities, emphasising that "racial diversity in the university is essential to the idea of a university in a multiracial society."[350] This publication also popularised the 'open' label claimed by both institutions.[351] *The Open Universities* became a key reference text for the defence of Academic Freedom under Apartheid. Juta re-published the original booklet in 1974 as a form of commemoration.

However, the booklet supported the continuation of "academic integration with social segregation" and did not directly criticise Apartheid's separate development policies beyond university education. The plenary at the Open Universities conference reached this position. Left-leaning critics of the booklet labelled it "a document of appeasement." [352] The final booklet does not detail the arguments for this conservative position. Possible reasons for the final choice range from the pragmatic view that the Universities needed to present the least controversial opposition possible if they hoped to win concessions from the state, to the more sceptical view that by defending the right for universities to choose their admissions policies, Wits could avoid accountability for internal discrimination against "non-European" staff and students.[353]

The continued support for social segregation opened the two Universities to criticisms of cognitive dissonance and hypocrisy. This policy amounted to an implicit acceptance of the

[348] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 307.
[349] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 308.
[350] Conference of representatives of the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, *The Open Universities in South Africa*, 6.
[351] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 297. Quoted the preface of Conference of representatives of the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, *The Open Universities in South Africa*, ii. "At Cape Town the admission of the first non-white students to studies at the post-matriculation level dates from back to the turn of the century; in the case of the Witwatersrand the corresponding date was 1910."
[352] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 308.
[353] See Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 11–25. for details from the early 1950s.

embeddedness of racial hierarchy and white supremacy in Wits and UCT's institutional culture. Under 'The University in Society' section of the booklet, a Wits Council member viewed "the mission of the white man in South Africa" as being "to spread civilisation among the Bantu."[354] Even if statements like this are understood in the context of a manoeuvre to assure the apartheid state that 'open' universities were not "an obvious and present danger to the existence of white South Africa",[355] the prominence of this type of racist paternalism raises serious questions about the roots of the 'open' universities' objections to University Apartheid.[356] While Wits may have aspired to prepare students for a "common, not a separate future", that future was not imagined as one of racial equality.[357]

[354] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 307.
[355] Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 307.
[356] Murray, "Wits as an `open' University 1939-1959: Black Admissions to the University of Witwatersrand.," para. 4. This paternalistic approach to Wits' relationship with Black South Africans has a longer history tracing back to influential University figures like former Principle Humphry Raikes.
[357] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 307.

c. The Academic Freedom March

22 March 1957 was in many ways the pinnacle of the Wits community's efforts to undermine the Separate University Education Bill. The SRC's Academic Freedom Committee and the Joint Staff and Student Committee organised a march from Wits' central campus to the Johannesburg City Hall as an act of symbolic protest. The theatrically choreographed march sought to unify the voices of various university constituencies in opposition to the proposed Bill. The route from campus to the City Hall was designed to emphasise the link between the University and Johannesburg's civic culture.[358] Despite differing opinions and motivations behind opposing the bill, all the protestors assembled behind a single placard carried in front of the procession which simply read "Against the Separate Universities Bill." Police and members of the Special Branch where present as the march proceeded, photographing and filming participants, but the march was not interrupted as it proceeded through the streets of Johannesburg.

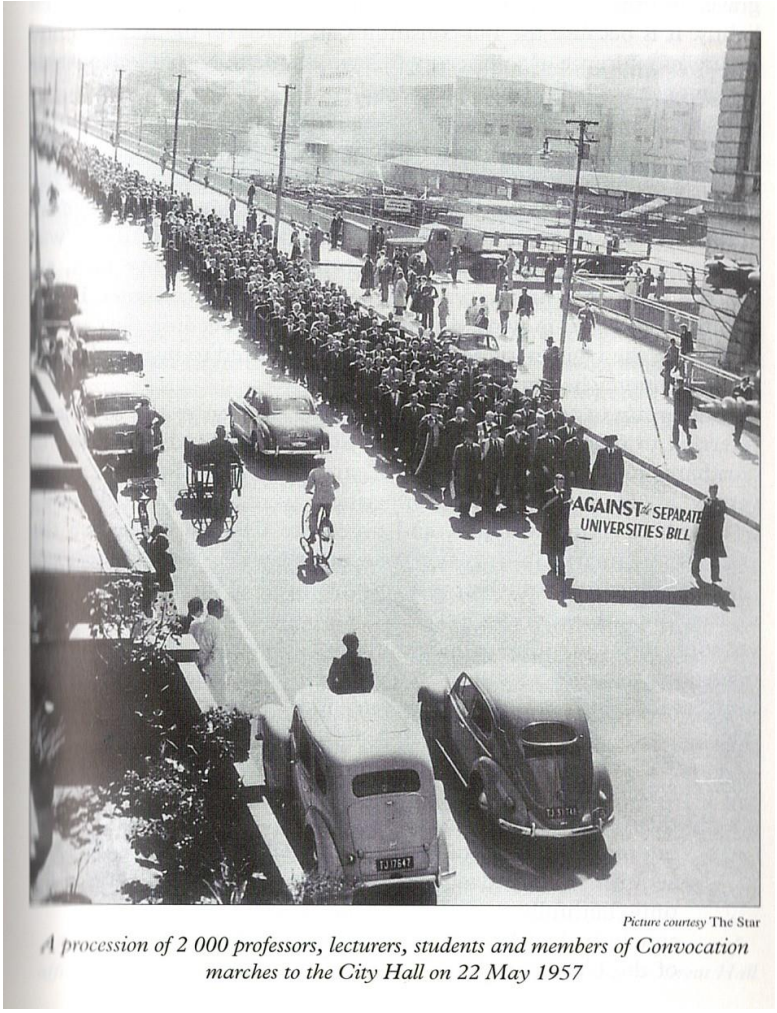


Image 6: A photograph of the 22 May 1957 march. in Shear, *Wits: A university under Apartheid*, 1996: 29

The march's organisers hoped that the spectacle of thousands of participants in full academic dress, marching in well-ordered and silent lines, would emphasise the link between the

[358] Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa," 104.

University's protest and the authority ascribed to academics as benevolent experts acting in the public's interest.[359] For both participants and observers of the march, there were strong parallels between this procession through the city and that of a graduation ceremony.[360] Unlike a graduation ceremony, however, the mood of the march was deeply solemn with no agitation, singing or shouting – creating an acoustic difference between this march and the unruly or disruptive norms associated with student protests in particular. Then-president of the SRC, Michael Kimberley, placed significant emphasis on this "solemn and dignified" nature of the march in its planning. The SRC hoped that "a solemn procession of the intellectual and professional elite of this country… will instil new courage in the waning self-confidence of the South African public."[361] Kimberley's sentiments, repeated by several student leaders in the *Wits Student,* provide insight into the growing self-confidence by members of the University in their ability to influence behaviour beyond the campus. The march and its emphasis on a large public display of united and respectably protest indicates that for some, the idea of Wits a leader in the imagined public sphere of Johannesburg and the country at large was believable. Its publicness embraced the elite idea of the University as a thoughtful, meritocratic and reasonable moral leader, whose dignified example could inspire a broader public to action.

According to Murray "well over 2000 academic staff, students and members of Convocation"[362] participated in the march dressed in academic gowns, university blazers and medical coats. *Die Transvaaler* observed that "some 100 of the students in the march were Natives, Coloureds, Indians and Chinese."[363] While this observation was probably intended to scandalise conservative white sensibilities, it served the dual purpose of illustrating the minimal extent of Wits' "open' status. If the estimate of two thousand participants in the march is accurate, less than half of Wits students participated in the 1957 march.

[359] Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa," 136.
[360] Louw, ""Voicing the Archive," 141.
[361] "Enthusiastic Support for Procession," *Wits Student*, March 1957, 2 edition.
[362] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 309.
[363] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 309.

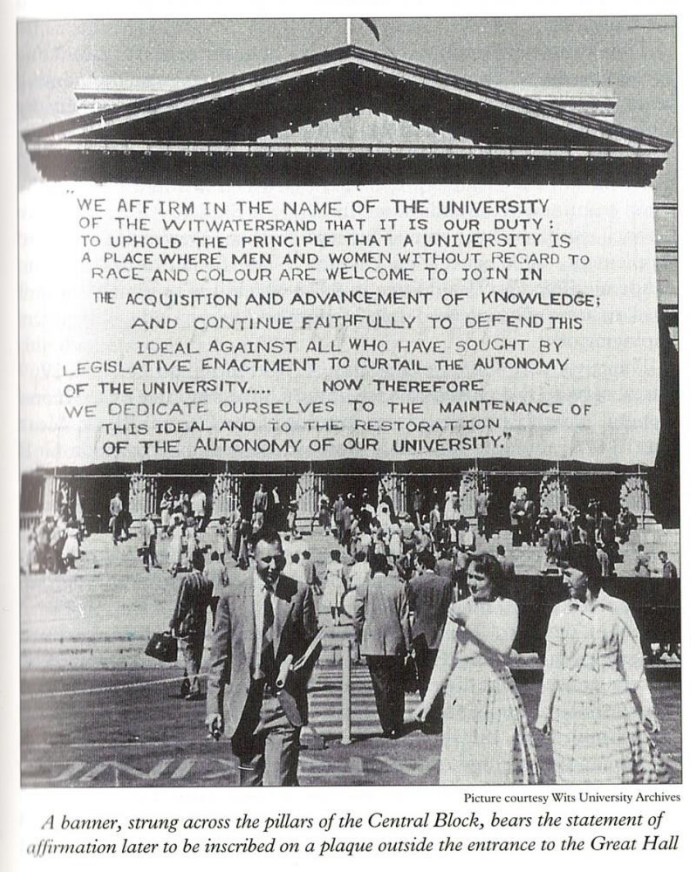
The march's audience reached well beyond the members of Wits University. *The Star* newspaper reported that "local and overseas pressmen, newsreel photographers and television cameramen" covered the event, amplifying the protest's message well beyond the physical audience able to witness the march in person.[364] The publicness of the march was enhanced further by a similar march of staff and students of the University of Cape Town in June of the same year.[365] Since first being utilised against the Separate Universities Bill, the aesthetic of the Academic march has resurfaced regularly in South African protest culture as a symbol of collective, unified protest.[366]

The significance of the protests as representing a unified University was emphasised in the *Wits Student* Vol. IX No.2 of April 1957. It described the proposed academic procession as "a step in the right direction" where "the participation of the whole university … will be a conclusive demonstration to the government and public of the university's total rejection of the bill; it will be particularly effective now when public support for the universities is becoming more articulate, and the Parliamentary opposition is intensifying."[367] The tone of the student authors of this article was much more antagonistic than the official university positions articulated through *The Open Universities* booklet. Rather than assuring readers that the University's concern was limited to Academic Freedom, the *Wits Student* explicitly linked the Academic Freedom march to "the general opposition to the Nationalist Government"[368] The overall emphasis on the unified and total university support that the aesthetic and discourse around the march conveyed, spoke to an effort to embody the idea of the University *qua* institution directly taking on its responsibility to inform and lead society on an issue that it saw as critical to the intellectual wellbeing of the country.

[364] Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa," 141.
[365] UCT Newsroom, "Timeline: UCT during the Apartheid Years," 2015, https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2015-04-23-timeline-uct-during-the-apartheid-years.
[366] The UCT's "Enough is Enough" protest in 2013 in response to gender-based violence, and the proposed university march to parliament in 2015 in response to FeesMustFall protests.
[367] "Wits Protest," *Wits Student*, April 1957, 2 edition.
[368] "Wits Protest."

d. The General Assembly

On 16 April 1959, the University of the Witwatersrand held its first General Assembly in the Great Hall. This was Wits' last public act of protest before the Extension of University Bill was officially passed. Protestors hung a declaration on the pillars of the Great Hall, which reaffirmed Wits' commitment to equal treatment of "men and women without regard to race and colour" and to oppose all "those who have sought by legislative enactment to curtail the autonomy of the University…" Principal Sutton, in an uncharacteristic[369] show of political participation in Wits' Academic Freedom campaign, read this declaration as part of the General Assembly.



Picture courtesy Wits University Archives

A banner, strung across the pillars of the Central Block, bears the statement of affirmation later to be inscribed on a plaque outside the entrance to the Great Hall

Image 7: The full declaration that hung on the pillars of the Great Hall before the first General Assembly of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Murray, The Open Years p.319

[369] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 15."He fitted [the] concept of Wits as essentially a training ground for professionals, and his political conservatism and caution ensured that he would not provoke the Nationalist Government in any way."

The assembly was a sober affair. After speeches and the declaration, the "University stood in silence … in protest against the loss of what it declared to be its most cherished position – the right to admit, without regard to race and colour, all who would join in the acquiring and advancement of Knowledge."[370] MacCrone delivered the assembly's main address. He outlined a history of the University's opposition to the Bill, thanked the University's supporters, and recognised the academic and spiritual impoverishment that the University now faced.[371] In identifying the publics that the University interacted with MacCrone specifically thanked; the members of parliament who on "two successive occasions resisted with all their resources the proposed legislation", large sections of the South African press, the support of influential men and women of all walks of life in South Africa, organised protests on the university's behalf by other organisations, "the great silent mass of the people, both White and Black, in South Africa, who have, we may be sure, followed our struggle with sympathy and understanding.", overseas institutions which had provided their support, Richard Feetham as Chancellor, and the student body, particularly the SRC who although *"over-exuberant and a bit too vociferous"* at times – acted as the watchdogs of the University.

MacCrone critiqued the condition of South Africa's democratic process, lamenting that the state had ignored universities' attempts to engage through formal channels. His emphasis that 'open' universities could coexist with universities of "another type" conveyed Wits' willingness to operate in a segregated society. His final remark carried a tone of both defeat and hopefulness; "thought shall be more resolute, Courage the keener, Spirit the greater, as our strength decreases." His words could also encourage resistance against further infringements on democratic freedoms. This institutional self-confidence and assertion of the value of the University's independence is part of why Wits has managed to maintain a prominent voice in general public discussions.

[370] Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa," 142.
[371] I.D. Macrone, "Speech Delivered at General Assembly of the University," April 16, 1959, Wits Central Records. "the lamps of tolerance, of understanding, of learning how to live with one another in a multiracial South Africa," were gradually dimming.

In comparison to the 1957 march, the General Assembly was a more in-house event for the Wits community.[372] Despite this, the assembly certainly influenced Wits' perceived public and social roles. Although addressed to a restricted audience, the event was also a form of spectacle, drawing significance from emulating private mourning. While the event's immediate public was limited to Wits staff, students and members of convocation, the assembly took place as part of a more broadly imagined public with numerous actors and observers, including opposition parliamentarians who put up at "spirited" debate at the second reading of the proposed bill, which lasted twenty-six consecutive hours.[373] This larger support base included UCT students and Black Sash members who held a continuous vigil outside parliament, undeterred by rain during this final debate.[374] The participating groups and individuals had through writing, petitioning, marching, picketing and speaking, created a body of oppositional text against the Separate Universities Bill and called into being a public of both supporters and critics, which expanded the debate about South African universities and their role.

The assembly closed with the dousing of "the flame of academic freedom in a big copper urn on the steps in front of the Central Block on the Main Campus", continuing the mourning metaphor.[375] Students invited Professor Phillip Tobias, who had been an active member of the Academic Freedom Committee, to perform this symbolic ritual of defeat.[376] For him, the failed protests of the 1950s were "the saddest and most unpleasant period" in his time at Wits.[377]

The 1959 assembly served as a moment to contemplate the past, present and future of the University. The dedication called for an annual affirmation of its principles. In so doing, it issued a mandate for future generations of the institution and provided a ritual to mark the "ancient, honourable and widely accepted University tradition" which had until then been "taken for granted."[378] This future-orientated discourse also set a precedent for how the question of

[372] Macrone. "Speech Delivered at General Assembly of the University," commented that "There is also a need for the University to meet together by itself, for all its members to come together as at a family gathering, to take stock and to consider the situation created by its loss."
[373] Murray, *Wits The 'Open' Years*. 326.
[374] *Wits Student*. Special Edition: Academic Freedom. April 1959.
[375] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 326.
[376] Louw, "Voicing the Archive: Documentary Film Making and the Political Archive in South Africa," 144.
[377] Louw, "Voicing the Archive," 144.
[378] Macrone, "Speech Delivered at General Assembly of the University."

Academic Freedom and universities' publicness would be addressed long after the rights removed by the Act were reinstated. The General Assembly has become a highly ritualised tradition, re-enacted at select moments at Wits and other South Africa's Higher Education institutions since 1959.[379] With statements from; the Chancellor of the University, Council, Senate, Forum, Convocation and the Student Representative Council – each represented through a designated chairperson or president - the constituencies at this first General Assembly started a tradition which would have many future iterations.[380]

The dedication read by Principal Sutton at the first General Assembly in 1959 was inscribed on a plaque in the same hall two years later;

> We affirm in the name of the University of Witwatersrand that it is our duty to uphold the principle that a university is a place where men and women, without regard to race and colour, are welcome to join in the acquisition and advancement of knowledge; and to continue faithfully to defend the ideal against all those who have sought by legislative enactment to curtail the autonomy of the University. Now, therefore, we dedicate ourselves to the maintenance of this ideal and to the restoration of the autonomy of our University.

The dedication emphasised the danger of external intervention and overlooked any reference to Wits' internal limits on the acquisition and advancement of knowledge. In doing so, the commemoration of the Academic Freedom protests silenced the small but significant group of Wits members who criticised the limitations of this early conceptualisation of Academic Freedom and established a strong base for the protest-only narrative. Evidence that the defence of institutional autonomy through the discourse of Academic Freedom had incorrectly conflated the

[379] Hylton White, "Why the Wits University general assembly failed: An anthropological view," https://www.ujuh.co.za/why-the-wits-university-general-assembly-failed-an-anthropological-view/.
[380] Wits University, "General Assembly of the University of the Witwatersrand," https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/general-news/2016/feesmustfall2016/statements/general-assembly-of-the-university-of-the-witwatersrand.htmlHylton White, "Why the Wits University General Assembly Failed: An Anthropological View," 2016, https://www.ujuh.co.za/why-the-wits-university-general-assembly-failed-an-anthropological-view/. Date Accessed: 5 October 2018.

Academic Freedom protests with a fight for social justice and equality is perhaps most articulately summarised by Philosophy lecturer F.S. McNeilly's article in the November 1956 *Forum*:

> "Once more, the liberal forces of South Africa are on the march. Once more, they have raised the wrong flag, grappled furiously with imaginary enemies …The 'non-Europeans' of our universities have been badly done by also. We shall miss them if they go, and they will miss us. But it is their rights that should have been defended, and not the imaginary rights of universities."[381]

This self-critical view of Wits' engagements in the Academic Freedom protests is noticeably lacking from the "protest-only" narrative that dominates the mainstream public image of Wits today. A legacy of this silencing is evident in the embeddedness of UCT and Wits in the liberal, South African imagination of what constitutes inclusive, public-orientated institutions.

iv. Lessons from the Academic Freedom Campaign

The four forms of protest discussed in this chapter, describe Wits' most well-remembered actions against the implementation of the Extension of Universities Act, 1959. Although the university's efforts did not stop the legal implementation of University Apartheid, they did succeed in making a "strong public statement or protest", and entrenching ideas of English-speaking, white institutions as bastions of liberalism and progressive 'race relations' during Apartheid. Despite their limitations in working across the imagined barriers of South Africa's racialised public spheres, the Academic Freedom protests did introduce a level of critique of the increasing racial segregation of public institutions to an otherwise indifferent white public sphere. The strong emphasis on the "dignified and solemn" character of Wits' protests, particularly the 1957 March and the 1959 General Assembly, has influenced how legitimate, productive protest at universities is imagined. These long-standing norms, which accommodated racial discrimination within the 'open' universities, are part of the practices which students in 2015 began to question. Wits' protests in the 1950s did manage to reach an unprecedented degree of consensus in terms of opposition to the proposed Bill, but what this chapter shows is that in trying to establish

[381] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 321.

*"*magnificent national and international support*"* against the Bill, the majority of Wits' protests in this period did not centre on a defence of equal rights and non-discrimination at the University.

In the question of practice versus principle, Wits positioned itself to defend what it considered an important set of principles – those of institutional independence and the value of unsegregated education – without going to the point where such defence was likely to have a practical impact on the state's position. While it is easy to critique Wits' Academic Freedom campaign as self-interested, liberal window dressing; however, this chapter reminds us also of the challenges involved in ascribing a common sense of purpose to institutions like universities which include diverse and different acting constituencies. By focusing on the universities' institutional rights to autonomy, the Academic Freedom protests asserted a particular positionality for Wits and UCT's in the South African public domain. This positioned the universities' roles as adjudicators of knowledge and 'openness' as central to the public responsibility of the Universities. The "protest-only" narrative that Barnes identifies as the dominant narrative of the 'open' universities is perhaps best-summarised by Wits' current online view of its past. Under "History and Heritage" on the current university website, a page titled "Liberal Tradition" makes strong claims to this protest-only identity under both Apartheid and Union. It reads;

> "From the outset, Wits was founded as an open university with a policy of non-discrimination - on racial or any other grounds. This commitment faced its ultimate test when the apartheid-government passed the Extension of University Education Act in 1959, thereby enforcing university apartheid. The Wits community protested strongly and continued to maintain a firm, consistent and vigorous stand against apartheid, not only in education but in all its manifestations."[382]

This chapter on Wits' protests against the Extension of University Education Act demonstrates that this protest legacy, even if exaggerated, is not fictional. The four actions detailed in this chapter demonstrate that significant work and organising went into Wits' opposition to the Bill.

[382] University of the Witwatersrand, "History of Wits," 2019, https://www.wits.ac.za/about-wits/history-and-heritage/. Date Accessed: 5 September 2018

These acts of opposition both drew on and re-affirmed the idea of the public role of universities as a rational-thinking, law-abiding, non-violent moral leaders of society. The perceived institutional coherence enabled members of the University to participate as members of a core national public sphere. It is clear, however, through the different organising tactics and internal debates that different constituencies at Wits were employing, that multiple ideas existed about how best to play this public role. The compromises made in terms of centring the issue of university autonomy, wrapped in the rhetoric of non-discrimination demonstrate the limitations inherent in presenting the university as a homogenous, ideologically aligned institution which can optimise its impact in the public domain.

In 1972, I.D. MacCrone effectively summarised the impact of the academic freedom protests on the University's publicness when he observed;

> "the University, although in the end defeated, had never been more united in its history – it had secured a wider degree of public support than ever before, it had retained its own self-respect as well as the respect of the international community of universities and it had, in a sense, acquired a soul, rather than just being a body with an intellect."[383]

The sense of unity, public support, international attention, and self-respect the protests of the 1950s generated led to a decisive shift in Wits' self-perception of its role and significance in the public life of South Africa. They served as a moment for the University to demonstrate that it was the type of public institution it had promised to become in the 1923 "Our University" supplement. The staff's Academic Freedom Committee's view of its work as mostly symbolic,[384] however, introduced a vital tension that continued to exist between the progressive, non-discriminatory self-imagination that the University claimed and its generally conservative approach to defending the rights of Black South Africans during this period.

While what constitutes 'radical protest' depends on context, this chapter has shown that the official voices of Wits, which coordinated these landmark protests, decided both *how* and *whose*

[383] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*, 57.
[384] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 306. Prof. J.S. Marais, chairmen of the Open University Liasion Committee "conceded there was no prospect of victory, but the principle could not be allowed to go by default."

Academic Freedom to defend. Academics like Philosophy's F.S. McNeilly[385] demonstrate that the limits to Wits' defence of Academic Freedom was not merely a product of ignorance or an underdeveloped sense of justice. Rather, they were actions shaped by Wits' publicness anchored in the English-speaking, white, liberal public that had helped to establish the University at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite rhetorical efforts to paint this liberalism as non-racial and equality-based, its willingness to compromise with conservative, racist elements of South Africa's white minority is telling.

Wits' protests against the Extension of University Education Act are a useful case study of how the discussions, debates and protests which take place in what is imagined as an inclusive 'public sphere' can perpetuate the types of exclusions that inclusive democracies are meant to avoid. The Academic Freedom protests which took place in this period at Wits and UCT provided a platform for the white, South African, English speaking public to further imagine themselves as the bastion of European civilisation in southern Africa. The activism of these universities was packaged as a defence of liberal values, free enquiry and meritocracy and seen in direct contrast to the nationalist bulwark of the Apartheid state. The Academic Freedom protests made the University re-think its identity as an institution of national cultural reproduction vis-à-vis a "University of Culture" for an international project of Western modernity. It became clear on examination of the publicness of these protests that, although at a superficial level they seemed to address the rights and needs of "non-European" for education, the primary participants engaged in the debate were white elites, split along linguistic and ethnically defined political boundaries and ideologies. The University's insular imagination of the Extension of University Education Bill's impact is perhaps most clearly evidenced by the silences of Black voices in the literature relating to these protests.

[385]Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 321.

The participation of Black students at the 22 May 1957 march, as well as Dr W.F. Nkomo's[386] address at one of the University's early mass meetings in 1956,[387] suggest that these protests did involve a multiracial student body. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that Wits University ever really questioned its position as a public institution for a 'European' public. Another gap in Wits' rhetorical commitment to "academic integration" was its apparent lack of direct engagement with peers at Black educational institutions. This implicit acceptance of the separation between academic publics became the basis for a much stronger critique of white liberal politics from the 1960s onwards with the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement.[388]

The persistence of this oppositional view of Wits', despite academic research[389] highlighting its limitations, is significant for understanding the publicness of the University. It raises a question about which audiences engage with what texts about the academy, and the power dynamics that govern these interactions. Although numerous texts about the University exist – formal academic publications, journal articles, newsletters, opinion pieces, memoirs, to name a few – different texts circulate among different publics. The apparent inability of the more critical perspectives to permeate popular memory of Wits suggests that they were treated differently by producers of mainstream public discourse. An awareness of these different forms of text and associated audiences has enabled Wits to put forward both the simplified oppositional and more nuanced 'change through association-reformer' identities. The relative inaccessibility of less complimentary texts acts as a barrier to demands for accountability from historically white institutions for their complicity with Apartheid.

[386] Dr William Frederick Nkomo qualified as a doctor through Wits' Medical School in 1947 and was the first black African to be elected onto the Wits SRC. His political career extended beyond the realm of student politics and included a role as a founding member of the African National Congress' Youth League in 1944, as well as being active as a member of the Black People's Convention (BPC). In 1972 he was elected the first African president of the South African Institute for Race Relations. Anne Digby, "Some Early Black Doctors - a Very Politically Active Cohort 1941 - 1954.," *South African Medical Journal* 97, no. 8 (2007): 578. Nkomo addressed a protest meeting on 7 December 1956, organised by the University Liaison Committee (Witwatersrand). He commented on the poor facilities at the South African Native College, Fort Hare to underline the educational inequity that ethnic universities would present. Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 23.

[387] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 28.

[388] Barnes, *Uprooting University Apartheid in South Africa: From Liberalism to Decolonisation*, 42.

[389] Murray, *Wits The 'Open' Years*.; Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*.

Attention to the specific discourses that Wits' Council and representatives of the Academic Freedom Committee mobilised, a clear emphasis on university autonomy over academic freedom emerges. These terms were, however, often interchangeable. Wits' protest demonstrated a strong concern about the precedent that the Extension of University Education Act would set for future government intervention in the University's functioning. This future-orientated concern may help to explain the widespread opposition at Wits, despite the relatively small number of students affected by the law. University autonomy was, correctly, understood as a pre-requisite of Academic Freedom, particularly in a context where the state demonstrated a willingness to intervene directly in the management and teaching of some (predominantly Black) universities. Isaac Kamola argues that the interdependent relationship between various groups of South Africa's white minority in terms of political and economic power meant that universities like Wits were more protected from state intervention by the predominantly white communities they prioritised.[390] Given the speed at which Apartheid policies were implemented post-1949, the limits of the protection that Wits enjoyed as an active member of South Africa's white core public sphere was perhaps difficult to predict. Potential interpretations for Principal Raikes and Sutton's relatively conservative attitude towards the Academic Freedom protests include institutional reluctance to provoke an unpredictable state as well as an effort to ensure continued support from university funders embedded in dominant networks of political and economic power.

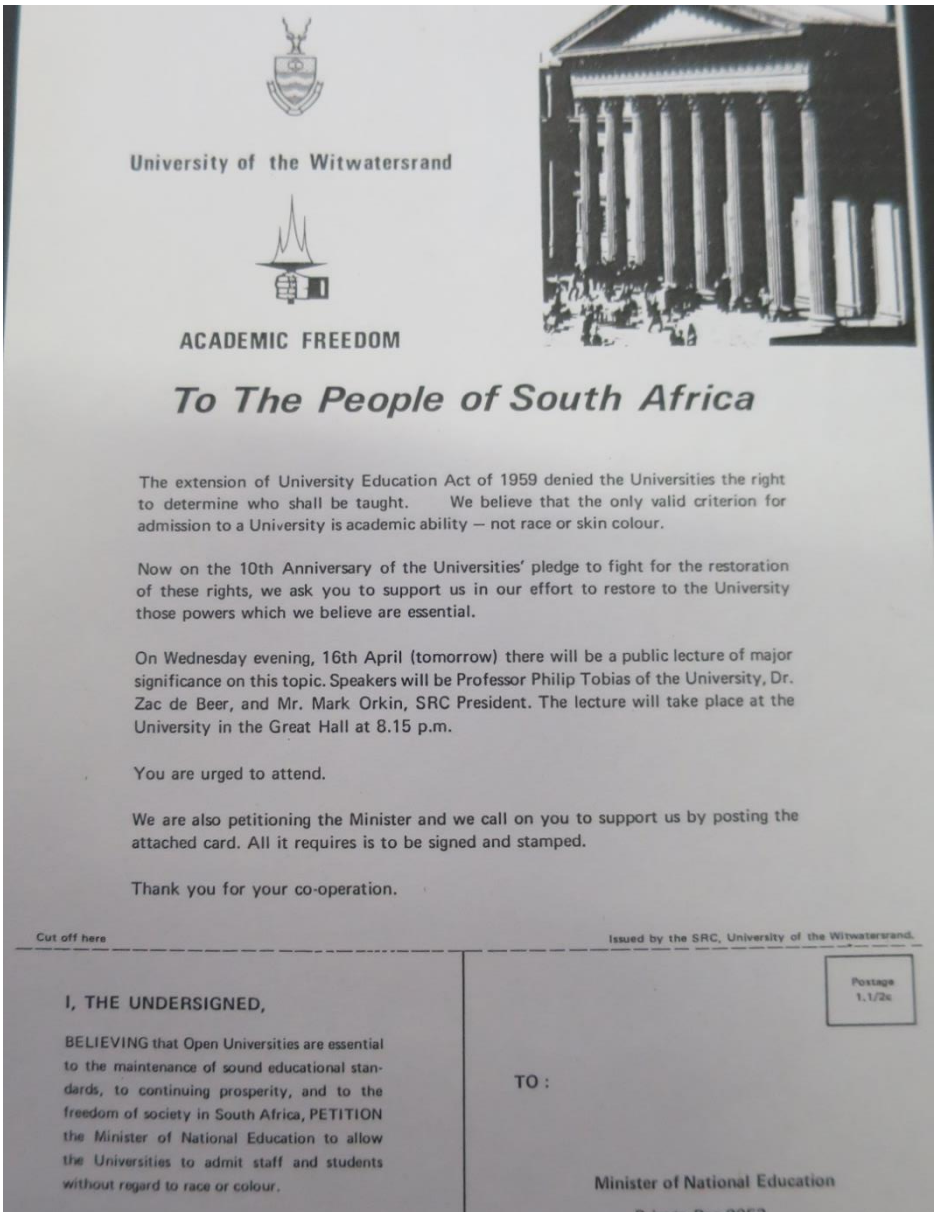
Despite the limitations of Wits' protests against the Extension of Universities Act, they did play a role in creating a precedent for future generations of white students to oppose the state and to further develop the concept of Academic Freedom in South Africa. The academics and students involved in the Academic Freedom Campaign drew on Wits' public profile both locally, and in the international academic sphere to create physical spaces, discursive platforms and educational opportunities to discuss issues related to Academic Freedom. Despite dominant public representations of these protests as a homogenous, "protest-only" narrative, this chapter has shown that the Academic Freedom protests generated a range of different intellectual engagements. They began to question how Academic Freedom should be conceptualised in

[390] Isaac Kamola and Tamson Pietsch Mgeng-Hsuan Chou, ed., *The Transnational Politics of Higher Education: Contesting the Global/Transforming the Local* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 47.

South Africa and the political responsibilities of public universities. Lastly, through its increasingly strong association to an Anglo-American, liberal 'universal' community of academics, Wits' Academic Freedom Campaign was one of the first examples that drew international attention to the developing oppressive nature of the Nationalist government in a pre-Sharpeville moment when the explicit violence of the regime had not yet been fully recognised.

Chapter 5:

Continuing the Conversation on Academic Freedom



University of the Witwatersrand

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

To The People of South Africa

The extension of University Education Act of 1959 denied the Universities the right to determine who shall be taught. We believe that the only valid criterion for admission to a University is academic ability — not race or skin colour.

Now on the 10th Anniversary of the Universities' pledge to fight for the restoration of these rights, we ask you to support us in our effort to restore to the University those powers which we believe are essential.

On Wednesday evening, 16th April (tomorrow) there will be a public lecture of major significance on this topic. Speakers will be Professor Philip Tobias of the University, Dr. Zac de Beer, and Mr. Mark Orkin, SRC President. The lecture will take place at the University in the Great Hall at 8.15 p.m.

You are urged to attend.

We are also petitioning the Minister and we call on you to support us by posting the attached card. All it requires is to be signed and stamped.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Cut off here

Issued by the SRC, University of the Witwatersrand.

I, THE UNDERSIGNED,

BELIEVING that Open Universities are essential to the maintenance of sound educational standards, to continuing prosperity, and to the freedom of society in South Africa, PETITION the Minister of National Education to allow the Universities to admit staff and students without regard to race or colour.

Postage 1.1/2c

TO :

Minister of National Education

Image 8: A pamphlet distributed as part of the 10th anniversary of the Extension of University Education Act. 15 April 1969

5. Continuing the Conversation on Academic Freedom

In the spirit of the 1959 declaration, Wits continued with a series of symbolic acts of opposition to University Apartheid and the Extension of Universities Act after the passing of the Act in 1959. This chapter will briefly outline some of the consequences of the bill's implementation at Wits, as well as how the concept of Academic Freedom developed on campus in the 1960s and early 1970s. This chapter focuses on the Van Wyk de Vries Commission of Enquiry into White Universities which took place between 1974 and1976. Wits' Vice-Chancellor, Guerino R. Bozzoli, was appointed to as a commissioner to this controversial enquiry.[391]

i. Wits After 1959

It is worth assessing the effect of the Extension of Universities Act on Wits' demographics, given to the emphasis that the Academic Freedom protests placed on institutional autonomy related to student admissions. In 1957, when *The Open Universities* was published, Black student enrolment at UCT and Wits accounted for 5 and 6% of the total student population respectively.[392] At Wits this percentage was relatively stable from the mid-1940s until 1959.[393] The new legislation resulted in the almost total exclusion of Black students from Wits; and a decline in their already small representation in the student body. After 1959, the only Black students at Wits were students who had registered before the law passed or those who obtained ministerial permission. The latter became increasingly restrictive as additional segregated institutions opened in the 1960s and 1970s.[394] Despite a 53.5% increase in total student enrolment from 1958 to 1970, Black student's share of enrolment decreased from 5% to a mere 0.34%, according to reports by the South African Institute for Race Relations. In 1958 only 1% of the Wits student body was classified as black African, and therefore the decline at Wits was not as marked as the figures for UCT and Natal University, where enrolments had been higher.[395]

[391] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 3.
[392] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 2.
[393] South African Institute for Race Relations to Author, "Wits Enrolment Figures by Race, 1954-1985," 2019.
[394] Cooper and Subotzky, *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998*, 3–4.
[395] Both UCT and Natal initially had a higher proportion of their student bodies which were Black, and by the 1970s, this percentage had dropped below Wits. South African Institute for Race Relations to Author, "Wits Enrolment Figures by Race, 1954-1985," 2019.

After the law passed, Wits meticulously followed government guidelines for student admission.[396] Despite continuing affirmations in support of the principles of Academic Freedom, Wits did not make any substantial effort to circumvent the new law.[397] The University's administration justified its cooperation with the law by arguing that it did not want to pursue admissions which might incur penalties for individual students. The Act penalised individual students, rather than the University infringements. Despite encouragement from Chancellor Richard Feetham (a strong supporter of the Academic Freedom Campaign) to "flood" the Ministry of Arts, Science and Education with applications from prospective Black students: the administrative office which processed these applications considered this approach a waste of labour.[398] The fact that prospective Black students continued to apply at Wits demonstrates continued demand for access, despite the new law. Wits' institutional complicity in the immediate aftermath of the law, supports chapter four's argument that its over-riding concern in the 'open' university protests was the primacy of institutional autonomy over academic freedom. Studies like Shear (1996) and Murray (1997) show no signs that Wits tried to circumvent these criteria - a practice utilised by the University of Natal in the early 1960s and adopted by other 'open' universities from the early 1980s. This critique holds particular weight between 1959 and 1961, before the passing of more restrictive conditions for ministerial approval.

In 1960 the Minister of Bantu Education rejected 186 of 190 applications from black-African students to study at white universities. The minister granted only 1 of 85 petitions to attend Wits. While most of the rejections were based on the existence of 'parallel' courses at racially-designated institutions, the eight people who applied to the Wits Engineering Department (for which there were no alternative institutions) were rejected because, according to the ministry, job opportunities for them did not exist. Proclamation 434 of 1960 listed specific courses at white institutions where ministerial exemptions for Black applicants were banned outright. This list

[396] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 232.
[397] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 232.
[398] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 232.

superseded potential ministerial exemptions and further limited the university's ability to appeal on behalf of "non-white" students.

Black students only reached 5% of Wits students again in 1977,[399] but there is evidence that the Academic Freedom campaign opened up some avenues for continued student activism on campus. The policy of academic integration with social segregation remained in the public eye when a debate erupted in 1969 about whether or not Black students should be allowed to use the Wits swimming pool.[400] The some SRC members proposed that Black students be allowed to use the swimming pool during the university day. Principal Bozzoli, on behalf of the University administration, accepted the proposal arguing that "recreational swimming by individuals during the academic day was part of the academic life of students"[401]. Wits, however, withdrew Bozzoli's concession after pressure from sections of the Afrikaans press[402] and government.[403] The incident indicated a small shift in the University management's understanding that Academic Freedom within the institution stretched beyond the classroom.

The demographic shifts caused by the Extension of Universities Act positioned Wits as an institution with two distinctly racially defined public roles. For white South Africans, it continued to represent a space of Liberal education, aspiring to the type of modernity promoted by the Western-capitalist academic centres Wits had historical relationships with. To Black communities in the vicinity of the University, Wits' role had transitioned from being a space of educational and cultural aspiration to, that of inaccessible institution acting as benevolent outside service provider. The 1971 50th Jubilee Celebration booklet reported that Wits had community outreach programs, coordinated through the university's established NGO, WITSCO, operating in communities like Alexandria and "16 Black high schools." Thus, going with the intensifying segregation of the 1960s, Wits did not primarily see its role in Black communities as one of providing university education. The descriptions in the Jubilee booklet suggest that a little under 10% of Wits Students were involved in these community outreach programs in 1970. These forms

[399] South African Institute for Race Relations to Author, "Wits Enrolment Figures by Race, 1954-1985," 2019.
[400] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 17.
[401] 26 May 1969 letter from Bozzoli to SRC president Orkin in Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 17.
[402] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 16.
[403] G.R. Bozzoli, *A Vice Chancellor Remembers* (Randburg: Alphaprint, 1997), 174.

of community outreach appear to represent Wits' main institutional structures for engaging with Black communities in this period, and likely carried an implicit sense of othering. The absence of references to the experience of Black students at Wits during this time in the institution's chronicling of its history suggests that at this point, the University saw its responsibility towards Black South Africans as offering support and expertise, rather than engaging with them as thinking and engaged members of Wits' public.

There is no record of any Wits academics resigning in protest when the Act was passed. Baruch Hirson recalls discussions with a few left-oriented colleagues but, "Eventually we decided that if we did resign we might make the headlines, only to be forgotten the day after."[404] This approach and Hirson's sense that this kind of action would receive little or no support from fellow staff and students differed markedly from what occurred at Fort Hare, where the well-known Z.K. Matthews and Don Mtimkulu resigned and ended up in exile. Academics at the Natal Medical School also threatened to resign en-mass if the government attempted to place their institution under the administration of the Department of Native Affairs. These three examples once again challenge the current memory of Wits' "firm, consistent and vigorous stand against apartheid."[405]

ii. Symbolic Protest Against the State & Academic Freedom

After the 1959 law passed, the first significant memorialisation of Wits' Academic Freedom protests happened on 17 April 1961. A commemorative plaque, inscribed in both English and Afrikaans with the dedication Principle Sutton had read at the Assembly, was unveiled at the entrance to the Great Hall by Chancellor Richard Feetham.[406] The unveiling ceremony also marked the beginning of an "Academic Freedom Week" where the SRC organised a petition to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science to allow Wits to be an open university once more.[407]

[404] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 320.
[405] University of the Witwatersrand, "History of Wits," 2019, https://www.wits.ac.za/about-wits/history-and-heritage/. Date Accessed: 5 September 2018
[406] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 32.
[407] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 31.

In addition to this physical marker, other practices dedicated to an ethos of Academic Freedom emerged. The triennial "Chancellor's Lecture" launched in 1961 was a public lecture, organised by the University's Academic Freedom Committee (est. 1957), which sought to reaffirm the principles of Academic Freedom outlined in the 1959 dedication. In 1963, the SRC supplemented the triennial event with an annual Richard Feetham Memorial Lecture, which also aimed to develop ideas and debates about Academic Freedom in South Africa that went beyond the state's definition of academic responsibility. The Academic Freedom lectures were open to public audiences, and they remain an ongoing feature of the cultural-academic life of Wits University today.

Two notable outcomes of these public lectures in shaping Wits' public role were Wits' ability to constitute an active discursive public interested in Academic Freedom and the entrenching of Academic Freedom as part of the University's public image. By making the lecture series a reoccurring feature of the University calendar, Academic Freedom became institutionalised as a central part of Wits' self-imagination and sense of public responsibility. Once established, practices like these become a type of taken-for-granted tradition that requires significant disruption to change. Secondly, because the Academic Freedom Committee was responsible for inviting the speakers, they, directly and indirectly, shaped both the audience and the contents of these lectures. In doing so, the Committee generated a useful archive through which to trace the shifts in the conceptualisation of Academic Freedom since the 1960s. Together with UCT, which started the T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture in 1959, the 'open' universities successfully embedded active debates about Academic Freedom and its implications into the fabric of expectations about the public roles of a South African university, weighting its responsibility to the universal concept of Academic Freedom over the state's view of responsibility.[408]

The British Member of Parliament and former Minister of Education, Sir Edward Boyle, gave the 1966 Richard Feetham Memorial Lecture at Wits. Boyle's address recognised that Academic Freedom should include both personal and institutional freedoms. In doing so, Boyle highlighted that Academic Freedom could be threatened by universities, as well as the state. The Feetham

[408] University of Cape Town, "History: TB Davie: Champion of Academic Freedom," 2019, https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/lecturesandspeeches/tbdavie/history/. Date Accessed: 24 July 2019

Memorial Lectures in this way contributed to new thinking about the concept of Academic Freedom which went beyond the old Wits positions, as well as those of T.B. Davie at UCT, which insisted on the need for 'the university' to decide on the four freedoms. Boyle's comments did not place 'the university' as the sole source of authority on Academic Freedom. He suggested that, depending on individual views, students and academics may have uneven experiences of academic freedom within the same institution. Referring specifically to publications, Boyle spoke to the potential for the university to also be complicit in the oppression of specific sectors of the academic community. Boyles drew on a definition of Academic Freedom from the Lord Robbins Committee Report on Higher Education in England (1963)[409] which demonstrated a more nuanced engagement with the concept than the discourse that dominated in the 1950s. Then, only a small group of students and staff recognised the institution itself as a potential oppressor of Academic Freedom.

On the 10th anniversary of the 1959 Act, the Wits Academic Freedom committees, and the SRC organised a series of commemorative events and engagements. This included a demonstration on the boundary between campus and a public road where nineteen Wits students were arrested and prosecuted. Increasing protests in these years led Wits to host another General Assembly on 7 June 1972 to protest the government's encroachment on the civil right to protest peacefully and to assemble for political meetings. The University's official position was to maintain the tradition of protesting within the confines of the Law, although the arrest of the nineteen students suggests that the forms of protest which the Nationalist had been willing to tolerate in the 1950s had shifted.

While the second General Assembly followed the original 1959 format, the new vice-chancellor, Prof. G.R. Bozzoli, openly condemned the state, beyond the confines of its education policy.[410]

[409] "For the individual teacher academic freedom means the absence of discriminatory treatment on grounds of race, sex, religion, politics and the right to teach according to his [sic] own conception of the truth rather than according to any predetermined orthodoxy. It involves the freedom to publish and … to pursue whatever personal studies are congenial." Boyle cited in Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 45.

[410] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 233. "We here present at this Assembly of the University do solemnly resolve to, affirm that it is the right of university students as of other bodies of citizens to express peacefully by public assembly and procession, their opinions on matters of public policy and their right

The progression of thought from the 1959 general assembly to the 1972 one demonstrates how the protests of the 1950s helped to establish a basis from which future generations of students and academics could draw links between academic and civil freedoms. In the main, however, as in 1959, the second General Assembly still imagined the University's public through the categories of staff, student and alumni as primarily liberal white South Africans.[411]

iii. The Van Wyk de Vries Commission of Enquiry

In March 1968, the Minister of Education, Jan de Klerk, father of F.W. de Klerk, appointed the Van Wyk de Vries Commission of Enquiry into Universities. The enquiry was "a very broad" - involving "the whole position of the universities in this country."[412] The commission was established, in part to investigate state funding for white universities, at the request of the Committee of University Principals.[413] The Minister used the opportunity of the Commission to extend the terms of reference to include student activities, which government argued had been "infiltrated" by Communist and left-leaning students.[414] Initially, the enquiry intended to focus only on English-medium, white universities but at the recommendation of Prof. H.B. Thom, the Vice-Chancellor at Stellenbosch University, the scope of the Commission grew, to enable comparisons across South African universities.[415] Strangely, but consistent with Apartheid thinking, the Commission's definition of "South African universities" excluded those institutions not classified as white, unintended acknowledgement that they were "bush colleges" rather than universities at that stage.

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thereby to seek public support for the opinions thus expressed record our conviction that it is particularly appropriate for university students as a privileged educational group to concern themselves with the inequities, deprivations and other shortcomings resulting from policies which affect the education of less privileged sections of the peoples of South Africa express our extreme distress and indignation at the violent measures taken by the Government to suppress the peaceful public assemblies and processions of university students, and at the exercise by the Government of extreme powers to restrict the free expression of opinion on matters of public policy in circumstances which do not constitute an emergency endangering the security of the State."

[411] "Wits Protest." This includes representation through governance structures like Council, but also funding and sponsorship relationships as well as business and political networks between alumni.

[412] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 2.

[413] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 3.

[414] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Second Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities" (Pretoria: Govt. Printer, 1974), 5.

[415] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, 3.

Constituted in 1968, the Commission provided its first interim report, focusing on finances, in 1969. The second interim report, released in 1972, dealt with "the non-academic activities of students at the universities with special reference to student unrest."[416] The main report followed in 1974, and its ten chapters ran to over five hundred pages. This thesis will focus on chapters three and four, which engaged most closely with the concept of Academic Freedom.

1. The main report:

The main report of the "The Commission of Inquiry into Universities" (1974) attempted to define Academic Freedom in a way that supported the idea of universities as serving a state-defined understanding of national development. It took this position, despite including a variety of alternative views drawn from submissions by different universities, individuals and international case-studies. The commission argued that "Academic Freedom" and "University Autonomy" were distinct and independent concepts, although they were commonly imagined as synonymous and carried "emotional overtones."[417] The Commission argued that an autonomous university could repress Academic Freedom and for a state-dependent university to support academic freedom, and contradicted arguments that institutional autonomy was a prerequisite for academic freedom.[418]

The Commission's effort of putting on this performance is indicative of the strong associations which universities, as public institutions, had come to share with "civilised Western" notions of Modernity which Apartheid promised its white citizens. Thus, the Holloway and Van Wyk de Vries Commissions of Inquiry become important show-processes for the consumption of those participating in the Apartheid state's particular brand of whites-only democracy.

Section 6 of the Commission's report specially addressed Academic Freedom and summarised submissions from various South African universities. It also included comparisons with Higher Education reports from the United States of America and Britain and Fourth International Conference of Universities (1965). In this section, the Commission's main finding was that despite "certain broad features" that the submissions shared, South Africa needed to develop "its own

[416] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 3.
[417] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 35.
[418] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 35.

interpretation to these concepts on the strength of its own history, tradition, social order and polity."[419] The Commission strongly rejected the idea that the types of freedoms described in the submissions could be organised into any universally valid truths, foregrounding the tension between how the universities' priorities particular freedoms concerning state articulated public responsibilities. The three most common criteria for the institutional autonomy that emerged from the submissions were: the appointment of academic staff, an academic basis for admissions and a free flow of information.

The commission settled on a definition of "university autonomy" as "the self-government of the university as opposed to the self-administration which is subject to rule imposed extraneously."[420] A submission by "one university" emphasised the differences between autonomy and academics freedom but listed the following as five important constituting features of both:

1) the power to make or influence appointments at the university,
2) to undertake financing within the limits of a budget with some constraints,
3) a say in who is admitted to study at the university,
4) a say in the discipline, teaching and examinations of the university,
5) and the right to publish professional findings.[421]

In the same section the commission emphasised that while the idea of medieval universities was grounded in corporate bodies "reminiscent of an ancient principality", modern universities could not be disconnected from their community and context. Even where universities (like Wits) were established under Royal Charter – giving them a broader set of legal rights to those established as corporations - sanctions withdrawing or cancelling the charter would be justified "should these rights be abused repeatedly."[422] The Commission argued that the universities' exercise of rights needed to be respected only in terms of "teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and service to the community". Anything beyond those parameters (including "taking an active part in politics in a non-academic manner") constituted legal overreach.

[419] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 35.
[420] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 47.
[421] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 36.
[422] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 48.

The Commission further noted that, before 1948, the state had limited University Autonomy. These limitations included ministerial permission for the establishment of any new faculty or department with state funding, the creation of specific posts, governance regulations and admission standards set by the Joint Matriculation Board.[423] Almost all of the examples of limited university autonomy included on page 37 and 38 of the main report relate to oversight of funds allocated by parliament or the Department of Education to universities. The historical relationship between state and university referenced here was one of accountability for state resources, rather than ideological or intellectual compliance.[424]

The Commission report conveyed a strong sense that the English-speaking universities were dangerous and disruptive institutions. The critique of student behaviour on English-speaking campuses was often framed as overreaching the responsibilities associated with Academic Freedom, justifying state intervention.[425] This view of the 'open' universities as dangerous and disruptive to the nation seems to have persisted in state narratives about Wits, despite their acquiescence with the law and the limitations of the Academic Freedom Campaign discussed in chapter four. This suggests that while the protests of the 1950s did not stop the Extension of University Education Act passing into law, they did have a substantial effect on how outside communities and the state, viewed Wits' public influence.

The Commission was concerned with the idea of the university as "*imperium en imperio"*[426]*.* This concern developed out of an apprehension of universities like Wits affiliating themselves with the "search for and service of truth",[427] where this "truth" might challenge national or local interests – as defined by the government. The significant international support which Wits received arguably motivated the University to imagine a sense of national interest that differed from that of the apartheid government. Already in the 1950s, the conference of the Universities

[423] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 37.
[424] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 75.These measures include the "conscience clause" which limited universities abilities to exclude students on the basic of religious, and a for the minister to "have a say" in the dismissal (but not the appointment) authorised posts.
[425] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 40."The State interferes with the freedom of the university only when it is no longer freedom with responsibility, but license aimed at destruction."
[426] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 52.
[427] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 211.

of the Commonwealth published a piece in the journal *Nature,* which openly criticised the state's attempts to limit university autonomy as leading "South Africa into barbarism and the destruction of civilisations."[428] By 1972, this same conference had requested Bozzoli and UCT's Vice-Chancellor, Sir Richard Luyt (along with all South African Vice-Chancellors) not attend the 1973 meeting in Edinburgh in light of the Academic Boycott.[429] Given the historical link between the university and Western Modernity's notions of civilisation and development, and the increasing international criticism of Apartheid in the 1960s and 1970s, the Van Wyk de Vries Commission can be understood as an attempt by the state to ensure that universities did not operate as sovereign bodies drawing an in international discourse of civil rights.[430] This despite the Commission's continued identification of white South Africans as "Europeans" highlights a desire to maintain a sense of legitimacy within 'the Western World."

2. Bozzoli's Minority Report.

Professor Guerino R. Bozzoli, the Vice-Chancellor of Wits between 1969 and 1977, appended a nine-page "Minority Report", published with the Main Report, that outlined his main disagreement with the rest of the Commission. Bozzoli's strongest opposition was to the findings of the second interim report, which focused on the "non-academic activities of the universities on and off campus"[431]. He refused to co-sign this part of the report and sought to distance himself from it.[432] However, Bozzoli was "content to append [his] signature to the remainder of the [main] report"[433] though he claimed that he had a "different philosophy in respect of universities" than the views expressed in chapters three and four dealing with "The University" and "The University and The State" respectively.

A central disagreement that Bozzoli articulated related to a university's "ethos." This "ethos" is akin to the 'institutional culture' of a specific university in contemporary language. For Bozzoli, this was how different institutions expressed the attitudes and values deemed most suitable by

[428] Congress of the Universities of the Commonwealth, "Universities in South Africa," *Nature* 179 (April 13, 1957): 745.
[429] Bozzoli, *A Vice Chancellor Remembers*, 235.
[430] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 52–53.
[431] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 2.
[432] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 520.
[433] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 520.

those imagined as the institution, within the shared legal basis that govern public institutions. Bozzoli challenged the notion that academic freedom as understood in the West should be constrained because the "unique characteristic of university existence in South Africa is that it is founded upon a social order based upon the principle of multinational separate development."[434] In line with the *Open Universities of South Africa* booklet, he argued that separate development was not the only tradition of significance in South African universities. Bozzoli reacted strongly to limitations on ability of universities "to determine [their] own character and directions", underlining the point that even after University Apartheid implementation, Wits' executive leadership imagined the university as having a self-referential sense of public authority.

Bozzoli's minority report did not explicitly advocate for the desegregation of the university sector, but he did identify the Extension of Universities Act as having been the point of a major fissure between the English universities and the state.[435] Bozzoli advocated against the further segregation of the education system, through the proposed segregation of the Joint Matriculation Board, which was the regulatator for high school academic standards in South Africa at the time. Bozzoli recognised that while the 46-person board did require reform, he opposed the proposal to create racially distinct boards.[436]

The question of politics in the university is a core theme in the report and is closely related to ideas about publicness. Wits, under Principal Raikes, and even more so Sutton took several steps to maintain a sense of political neutrality on campus. Bozzoli chose to argue for diversity rather than the term political neutrality. He argued that a diverse university ethos and "tradition" were potentially more stable as a social institution than one that mimicked transient governing parties of the state.[437] Bozzoli argued that universities ought not limit expression of groups or individuals within its community who disagree with state policy, provided that they operate within the law. Secondly, that it

[434] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 521.
[435] Bozzoli, *A Vice Chancellor Remembers*, 149.
[436] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 527.
[437] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 527.

> "is also conceivable that the policies of the particular political party in power at any one time might conflict with the ideals strongly believed in by a particular university. I believe that in such circumstances the university should have every right to express its disagreement with such a policy, even though it has no alternative, in terms of the law, but to adhere to it."[438]

Bozzoli's statement here is one of the earliest that does not limit the political interests of the university, or its groups and individuals, to the theme of education. It takes on a much more oppositional approach in relations to the state compared with MacCrone's Statement at the 1959 General Assembly.

3. Analysis

The Van Wyk de Vries Commission Reports yield two useful findings for this thesis. Firstly, by the 1970s, Academic Freedom was a prominent enough concept that the Commission accepted its existence as desirable. The central debates about Academic Freedom in the reports focused on developing a specifically South African understanding of the term. The report found, in line with submissions to the Commission, that academic freedom held benefits for both members of the university and communities the universities were imagined to serve.

Bozzoli's minority report and refusal to associate with the second interim report demonstrate two elements of Wits' publicness in the 1970s. Firstly, his cooperation with the Commission, despite his explicit criticism of the Commission, showed a continuation of the University using formal state procedures to circulate oppositional discourse. In the context of an increasingly oppressive society, this behaviour highlights that for some, Wits' perceived public role was to promote what Heribert Adam and Le Roux refer to as "change through association."[439]

Secondly, Bozzoli's impact as a leader of the University affected its' publicness. Given Principal Sutton's aversion to political controversy, it seems unlikely that he would have opposed the Commission's findings strongly enough to publish a minority position.[440] While individual agency and character do impact the way that specific decisions about actions at the university happen,

[438] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 527.
[439] Le Roux, *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: Between Complicity and Resistance*, 38.
[440] Murray, *Wits The "Open" Years*, 151.

the cumulative and developing nature of institutional culture also shapes which individuals are appointed or elected into influential positions at particular moments in time.

Bozzoli's minority report serves as further evidence that despite the flaws and failures of Wits' Academic Freedom protests, the protests of the 1950s set a precedent which became a thorn in the side of the Apartheid state.

This view is confirmed by the Commission's second interim report which stated;

> A) The state of affairs at "English-language universities is unsatisfactory and poses real dangers for the future"
> B) The state of affairs reflects a pattern of disharmony and causes conflict with the communities which the university finds itself in. This may eventually bring the future of the university into jeopardy.
> C) These non-academic activities want to "change society entirely, and the instrument of change is unrest."
> D) Students and universities are being "misused for militant political action" that is illegitimate because it exceeds the university's "sphere of competence." Student action beyond that sphere was irregular and unlawful. It concluded, "In these matters there is not the slightest indication that students and universities are academically active despite their double talk and pretexts."[441]
> E) There is "no place" for staff at universities who actively take the lead in such protests.
> F) NUSAS limits the real representativeness of SRCs and contributes at least in part to the very low (30% or less) turnouts at SRC elections.
> G) The dedication of universities to academic freedom, without expressly confining opposition to national policy and the laws of the country to the sphere of competence of the university, has given NUSAS an opportunity of using it to create a militant political machine. The position of authority of the university authorities over students who are active in this political machine has inevitably been considerably weakened. In some cases, the university authorities give the impression that they identify themselves with the

[441] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 72.

> political actions of their students; in other cases, such conduct would appear to be fully supported by the university authorities. [442]

The above points, while dealing predominantly with the behaviour of students and NUSAS in particular, described what the Commission designated 'non-academic activities' of university life. Wits students did play a leading role in NUSAS anti-apartheid organising, and NUSAS campaigns were active on the Wits campus. Through commissions like the Van Wyk de Vries Commission and the 1973 Schlebusch Commission of Inquiry,[443] the state contributed to public perceptions of Wits University as "unworldly and unwilling to work for the common good." While the Commission perceived Wits as disruptive to an Apartheid idea of public interest, this perceived opposition, does not automatically mean that Wits was considered progressive or radical in anti-apartheid circles. Later critiques from Professor William Makgoba (Wits) and Prof. Piet Naude (Vice-Chancellor of Fort Hare) in the 1990s,[444] as well as the apparent absence of active support or collaboration between Wits and various groups of Black intellectuals and activists in the 1960s and early 1970s, highlight is the University's complicity in accepting the primacy of a white, minority public sphere.

Lastly, the Commission's concern that the pursuit of Academic Freedom would exceed the "sphere of competence" of universities relies on the understanding that their public role is educational in a purely academic sense. Although the discourse of ethics and moral leadership abound in Wits' early decades, the general aversion to political activity beyond the scope of education, discussed in previous chapters, shows that for many years Wits' institutional imagination shared this limited concept of the University's sphere of competence. This chapter demonstrates that by the 1960s and 1970s some actors at Wits, like Vice-Chancellor Bozzoli and various student groups, begin to push the boundaries of what public and social matters academics could hold authoritative positions on.

[442] Commission of Inquiry into Universities, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities," 73.
[443] Investigated NUSAS, the University Christian Movement (UCM), the Christian Institute of Southern Africa (CI) and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), all organisations with active relationships to Wits.
[444] Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, iii.

iv. Legacy of Academic Freedom at Wits Post-1959

The concept of Academic Freedom generated numerous debates related to the public roles of universities after 1959. Despite the limitations imposed by the Extension of Universities Act, these debates were significant enough for both the state and Wits to continue to invest resources into better understanding Academic Freedom and University Autonomy in South Africa. Wits did this primarily through symbolic acts of remembrance such as the memorial plaque and the Richard Feetham Memorial Lectures. The state included Academic Freedom in the scope of the Van Wyk de Vries Commission as a mechanism to claim a degree of public legitimacy and understanding.

Chapter 4 described some of the modes of public address that Wits used in its Academic Freedom Campaign. This chapter illustrates how these forms of address became university traditions and that a distinctive characteristic of the literature on Academic Freedom that emerged in opposition to the Extension of University Access Bill was its claims to a long history of Academic Freedom.[445] The 1950s protests gave form and substance to what Academic Freedom meant in a South African context and sought to draw on a culture of Western modernity as a source of legitimacy that challenged, if not exceeded, the political interests of the state. Through marches, writing, student meetings and assemblies, and emphasising its links with a sense of universal Western academic norms, Wits reinforced the notion of Academic Freedom as socially valuable and affirmed its self-referential authority to determine the limits of these freedoms.

The widespread acceptance of the value of Academic Freedom – however loosely the concept was defined – is intimately intertwined with how Wits' public roles were shaped in this period. While the 1959 Act did politicise some staff and students in favour of an equal South African society, the majority of those who participated in the Academic Freedom Campaign followed the law after it passed without significant opposition. The public image of collective opposition from 'the University' in the 1950s did help to create space for a minority of left-leaning staff and students whose politics developed into a more nuanced and ideologically consistent culture of

[445] M. Kimberley, "Presentent's Message to Freshers: A Crucial Years in Wits History," *Witwatersrand Student*, March 1957, 1. "The independence of the university is a long-honoured tradition in the Western World, and it has through long experience, been found essential for the proper function of the university community of staff and students who seek the truth, to ensure that there is no outside interference in the internal affairs…"

opposition to the Apartheid state. The "protest-only" narrative identified by Barnes and demonstrated by Wits' online claims to heritage suggests that this minority came to have a disproportionate role in shaping the public imagination of Wits within the white public sphere. Part of why the state tolerated this type of opposition in the 1960s and 1970s was its concern with maintaining the appearance of democratic and procedurally legitimate government. Therefore Wits, a white public institution, with established links to both local and international political and economic elites, was less vulnerable to state intervention than Black institutions

Chapters 4 and 5 explore shifts in how Wits interacted with different communities. New modes of public engagement in the 1950s to the 1970s did not totally replace older forms. For example, while the mass-march and General Assembly can be viewed as new, senior management's engagement with government through deputations, commissions and letters continued old relationships. Bozzoli's participation in the Van Wyk de Vries commission was an example of this, as was the SRC-organised petition for the re-'opening' of Wits in 1962.

v. Warnings against Orthodoxy in Academic Freedom

In terms of the historical development of the concept of Academic Freedom, the 1960s and 1970s revealed a more nuanced debate which attempted to distil the concept beyond it only referring to government intervention. This happened primarily by questioning the notion of university autonomy and accountability. Commenting in 1987, Neville Alexander emphasised that a central matter in this tension relies on recognising the university as a partisan body, with a particular set of interests related to class reproduction and the maintenance of its own social and political capital. Recognising this self-interest raises the question of the extent to which society should trust universities to act in what gets imagined as 'the public interest'. The case study of Wits' oppositional position towards Apartheid does not encourage much trust in this regard. A notable limitation of the self-referential authority that Wits displayed post-1959 is history of prioritising a white, Eurocentric idea of 'the public', even when a minority of Black people joined the University. Academic Freedom is a concept mediated by the social and political context of the society within which it tries to exist.[446] The question of how to balance and better define

[446] Dlamini, "University Autonomy and Academic Freedom in South Africa," 22.

measures of academic freedom for individuals and constituencies within the university, against the increasing, and legitimate demands for external accountability remains vital for thinking about the role that Academic Freedom plays in our contemporary understandings of what it means to be a public university.[447]

Suren Pillay, writing in 2013, warned that the notion of Academic Freedom has shifted from a "strategic disposition cultivated against the apartheid state into an orthodoxy that has become its own virtue."[448] The overemphasis on Institutional Autonomy that this thesis has highlighted supports the argument that orthodox thinking about South African Academic Freedom accepts "the academy" as the best authority to decide on the boundaries between concepts like Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy. In post-1994 South Africa, institutions like Wits that make claims to the "protest-only" narrative, fit more comfortably into the imagined role of benevolent, informed academic institutions, than those who complied openly with Apartheid. Their knowledge, therefore, considered more trustworthy in guiding society towards an optimal social outcome. The influence of this image becomes increasingly powerful when citizens' interests clash with those of the state.

The central role of the Academic Freedom protests at the 'open' universities in establishing the norms of responsible public engagement for South African universities, has produced an orthodoxy that is mainly concerned with principled stances and symbolic protest. This norm has the potential to crowd out expectations of universities to make more tangible and measurable changes in society. The student protests of 2015 are one form of challenging this tradition of symbolic public discourse in favour of reconstitution of who gets imagined as the University's public. Finally, the hegemonic position of the 'open' universities in imagining of the concept of Academic Freedom in South Africa creates a barrier in how we conceptualise the attacks on Academic Freedom at ethnic universities after 1959. Rather than being included in a historically sensitive understanding of South African Academic Freedom, these infringements seldom get

[447] Du Toit, "From Autonomy to Accountability: Academic Freedom under Threat in South Africa?," 129.
[448] Suren Pillay, "Is Institutional Autonomy a Myth?," *Mail & Guardian Online*, June 7, 2013, sec. Education. Date Accessed: 3 November 2017

attention and their unique challenges concerning publicness and institutional academic legacies rarely circulate as part of the public discourse on Academic Freedom.

This thesis is only able to scratch the surface of a complex debate about academic freedom, institutional autonomy and social accountability. It has shown however that that academic freedom in South Africa, like many concepts in Higher Education, continue to be dominated by the experience of historically white universities. This is true even though their experiences only constitute a small proportion of the higher education landscape and current university intake.[449] Universities established after 1959, were subject to much more direct state intervention. Although some instances of state intervention beyond student admission did happen at 'open' universities – such as the Mafeje Affair at UCT – the state appears to have been much more concerned with keeping up the appearance of non-intervention at white institutions, than at their Black counterparts. The state's interference in Academic Freedom at Wits took place through indirect forms of intimidation like the Van Wyk de Vries Commission.

It may be tempting to subscribe to Johan Cartwright's argument that Wits University only started to develop "any clear duties or responsibilities … beyond its own walls" in the late 1980s. The positions put forward by Wits voices in *The Open Universities* booklet, the *Wits Student* and the Van Wyk de Vries Commission, however, provide evidence that even in the 1950s, influential people at Wits recognised the social and economic benefits of Academic Freedom for both students and various sectors of society. The last two chapters on the Academic Freedom debates do, however, demonstrate that, even when the institution attempted to defend the rights of a Black, educated public, Wits' default – whether strategically pertinent or not – was to mobilise predominantly white, English-speaking publics to further these aims.

[449] Statistics South Africa, "Education Series. Volume V: Higher Education and Skills in South Africa, 2017" (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2017), 26.While exact enrolment data for Wits, UCT and Rhodes universities was not immediately available, Figure 2.22 illustrates that even if these institutions accounts for 100% of all post-school education (a significant overestimate of total enrollemet) in their respective provinces, historically 'open' universities would account for only 42% 0f total post-school educational enrolment in South Africa.

Chapter 6:

Popular Voices in the 1970s and 1980s

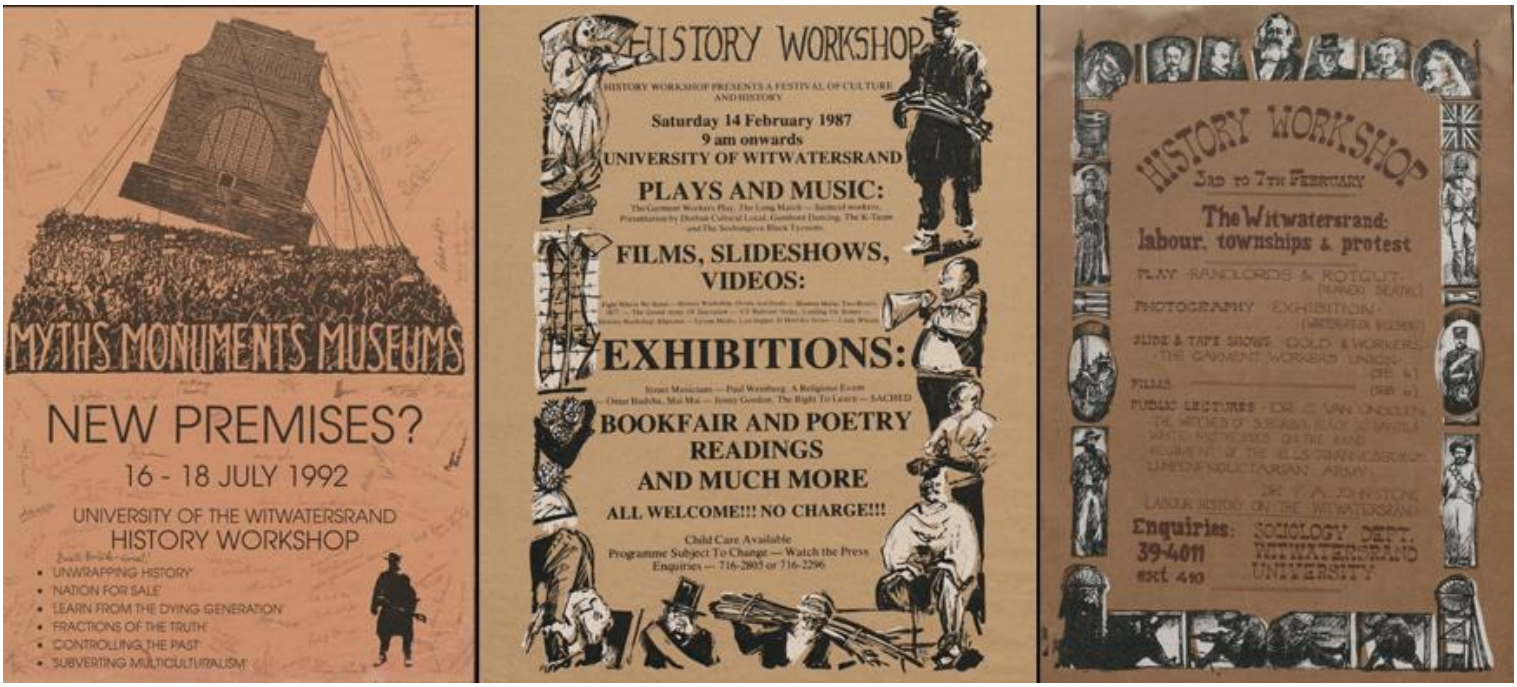

Image 9: Posters for Wits History Workshop Events put on display for the 40th anniversary of the Workshop's establishment

6. Popular Voices in the 1970s and 1980s

Bill Readings (1995) captures an essential characteristic of the modern idea of the university when he observes that "[t]he University provides a model of the rational community, a microcosm of the pure form of the public sphere."[450] An essential feature of this ideal rational community is the opportunity for transparent discussion and debate to inform decision-making and direct society towards action. Wits University's limited history as a space for inter-racial interaction has given it a privileged position in the liberal imagination of an ideal multiracial, South African university. This is because it is one of the few institutions of the core public sphere which, at least at a rhetorical level, sought to create "enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens."[451] This chapter explores the period from 1976 to 1994, where various efforts were made at Wits to include Black communities into the imagined public that the University sought to serve. This chapter focuses on a close study of the Wits History Workshop (WHW) as an early and influential attempt to challenge the nature of the relationships between Wits' academics and South Africa's social world, particularly in the geographic vicinity of the University.

Albert O. Hirschman's analysis of voice as a form of "interest articulation" within organisations has helped us think through the Wits History Workshop's contributions to the public roles of the University in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the WHW terminology at the time tended to focus on "experience" rather than "voice", reflections at the "Life After Thirty" conference in 2010 show that the WHW project fits comfortably within the framework of voice.[452] Best known for their contribution to the development of "Popular History" and the promotion of oral history as

[450] Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 20.
[451] Department of Education, "White Paper Three: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education," July 24, 1997, 4.
[452] Philip Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," *African Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 13–27. "From its inception the HW had a broader intellectual agenda that giving public voice to the marginalised", 14. "Collectively [WHW] members were united by the desire to write history from a grassroots perspective to give voice to the mass of so-called 'ordinary' South Africans who had been silence by white and bourgeois domination", 16.

a methodological tool, the WHW tried to amplify the voices and experiences people they considered "ordinary" using the elite platform of the University.

The primary sources that this chapter draws on are the published editions of selected conference papers, as well as the annual reports of the History Research group, available through the Wits Central Records Archive. Similar to the way that this thesis has challenged the idea that "the University" has a singular 'true' identity, one of my departure points is that the Wits History Workshop was not static as an entity in the fifteen years after its launch in 1977 that this chapter covers. The project of the WHW engaged with a range of academics, students and communities, and it is possible that authors who participated in the conferences and had their papers published, may not have self-identified as part of the WHW. It would, however, also be narrowly-analytical to limit the WHW to the official organising committee listed in each annual report. Thus, even in this relatively small Wits case study, the authors exerting varying degrees of agency, underline the challenge of trying to separate what becomes imagined as institutional publicness and practices of individual agency in collective life. However, one can safely say that the History Workshop was a move away from the economic determinism which dominated radical South African histories from the 1960s onwards. The Workshop aspired to a more agent-centred approach to history writing that included Black historical subjects and made some attempts to engage with a Black public sphere which the University had historically ignored.

i. Establishing the Wits History Workshop

The Wits History Workshop started as a small interdisciplinary group of academics at the University of the Witwatersrand. It became a formal unit of the University in 1984, under the official name "the History Research Group." Two major intellectual strands influenced the Wits History Workshop's founding members. One was the "new school" of radical Marxist social history emerging in England and the United States of America in the 1970s and 1980s. Two young academics at Wits returning from postgraduate studies in the UK, Belinda Bozzoli and Charles van Onselen, imported the ideas of E.P. Thompson's "History from Below" and as the project

developed, it adapted elements of this Marxist theory to the South African context.[453] The other significant influence was South Africa's (re)emerging labour movements, which Eddie Webster and Phillip Bonner had engaged with through worker education programs outside of the University.

The Wits History Workshop organised its first conference in February 1978. The theme, *Labour, Townships and Protest*, was taken over from a Labour History conference organised at Wits the previous year by Phillip Bonner, Peter Kallaway and Eddie Webster, in which left-leaning academics sought to engage academically with South Africa's changing social and political landscape.[454] These changes were represented most emblematically by the Durban Strikes of 1973, the 1976 Soweto Uprising, and the development of black worker organisation, which eventually resulted in the legal recognition of black trade unions in 1978.

The Workshop, chaired by Belinda Bozzoli, became a triennial event. From 1981 onwards, the Workshop included both 'open days' and more formal, academic conference presentations and discussions on the Wits campus. In 1984, a "Popular History Day" was added to the Workshop's programme and took on a hybrid conference-workshop format. The last open day took place in 1990. After that, the Workshop continued to exist, hosting a "Myths, Monuments and Museums" conference in 1994, but it has subsequently undergone numerous shifts in terms of organising strategies and core members. The Wits History Workshop continues today under the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities located within the Wits History Department.

A committee of invited academics from the disciplines of Sociology, History, Social Anthropology, Political Science and Literature organised the Workshop's conferences. Interdisciplinary collaboration was necessary both because of the small size of some departments and the generally conservative leanings of most Wits staff. [455] The triennial conferences became a point of contact for national and international academics interested in developing alternative

[453] Philip Bonner, "New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa 1977-1994," *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 3 (1994): 978.
[454] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 15.
[455] Bonner, Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 16. This perspective was one echoed by Callinicos's remark that it was a "small group of academics", personal correspondence, 2015.

approaches to the established modes of South African history in the 1970s.[456] While the methods, participants and committee members changed from conference to conference; in general participants involved with the WHW opposed racially exclusive state histories, teleological national liberation histories and the narrow positivism that dominated university history departments around the country.[457] After WHW received recognition from the University in 1984, the Wits Council funded its core costs.[458] It also received funding from outside the University – both locally and internationally. This supported its expansion from the triennial conferences to include a series of "short term projects" that would run for a few years at a time.

1. Societal Context: 1970s and 1980s

The Wits History Workshop emerged at a moment of significant change both within and beyond the University. By the mid-1970s 'Grand Apartheid' with its forced removals and Bantustans was in full swing and firmly repressive. The banning of organisations and individuals, censorship and restrictions on public gatherings, meant that extra-parliamentary political activities critical of the state were severely restricted and dangerous. Institutionalised forms of representation excluded the vast majority of the South African population. The "separate but equal" discourse which the state promoted during debates on the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, had as predicted, proved entirely false. In 1972 the student leader Ongoptse Abraham Tiro gave a powerful graduation address at the University of Turfloop. Assinated by that state in 1974, Tiro's 1972 address was a significant moment of disruption in the Higher Education landscape. The Tiro Affair gave notice of the developing momentum of an emerging Black Consciousness Movement, which was starting to shift the dynamics of anti-apartheid organising around the country.[459]

[456] Leslie Witz, Jung Ran Forte, and Paolo Israel, "Epistemological Restlesness: Trajectories in and out of History," in *Out of History: Re-Imaging South Africans Pasts*, ed. Jung Ran; Israel Forte Paolo; Witz, Leslie (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2016), 5.
[457] Witz, Forte, and Israel, "Epistemological Restlesness: Trajectories…", 5.
[458] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fifth Annual Report: 1 October 1988 - 30 September 1989" (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1989), 5–6.
[459] Arianna Lissoni, "Student Organisation in Lehurutshe and the Impact of Onkgopostse Abram Tiro," in *Students Must Rise: Youth Struggles in South Africa Before and Beyond SOWETO '76*, ed. Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 34.

In this context, activism at Wits began to shift from narrow educational opposition to state intervention towards an open critique of the Apartheid state. Physically and intellectually, the University provided a relatively safe environment to express political dissent – for those who could access campus. On top of this, Wits University expanded its teaching staff in the mid-1970s, creating new opportunities for young academics.[460]

Previous chapters have already discussed Wits' history as a self-declared progressive, liberal institution. Recognising that the "the University had historically served the predominantly white middle-class community of the Witwatersrand and that efforts should be made to open it effectively to all who qualified academically and wished to receive an education in the English language", Vice-Chancellor Daniel J. du Plessis commissioned research in 1978 for a new strategy for the University, which led to the publication of "The Academic Plan" in 1980. The first Black students admitted without ministerial permission since 1959 began 1984.[461] The new academic plan went further than previous rhetoric about inclusivity and non-racialism at Wits by recognising that "students were not being educated to be fully aware of the social and economic problems which surrounded them, and the University was not doing enough to equip able students from disadvantaged sectors of the South African educational system to overcome their early educational disadvantages…."[462] The attitude conveyed in these statements is unique in that it recognises the University as complicit in creating and sustaining the unjust and inequitable society it had rhetorically opposed for several years. Du Plessis's critique directly pointed to limitations in two of the University's self-defined public roles; teaching and learning; as well as civic and moral leadership. Unlike the 1960s, this moment saw the University articulating the institution's priorities taking cognisance of the segregated, imagined Black public sphere that it had largely ignored until this point.

[460] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 16.
[461] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 79.
[462] Shear, *Wits A University in the Apartheid Era*, 79.

ii. The Wits History Workshop Conferences.

The Wits History Workshop was enmeshed in the shifting relationships between the University and Black communities. WHW's characteristic triennial Workshops expanded from an academic conference to include "Open Days" and "Popular History Days" from 1984 onwards. The Open Days broke the mould of the conventional teaching and learning function of the University by expanding the University's typical audience and teaching formats. This created brief pockets where off-campus participants and performers could begin to challenge some of the University's authority and control over knowledge transfer. This section gives a brief overview of the scale and themes related to each of the Wits History Workshops[463] between 1978 and 1990.

The first "Labour, Townships and Protest" Workshop in February 1978, consisted of thirty-five papers presented in a traditional seminar format, although the seminar was held off-campus to facilitate the participation of FOSATU trade union members. The papers presented at the conference were selected by the WHW Committee, although the audience was open. The content focused on the Witwatersrand region, with a small cluster of work about Cape Town.[464] The programme also included a photographic exhibition and a performance of *Randlords and Rotgut* by the Junction Theatre Company. The first chair of the WHW Committee Belinda Bozzoli identified two "seemingly contradictory motivations" for its geographic focus.[465] The first was a regional specificity in how the Witwatersrand had experienced capitalist development. Thus, WHW's local approach to history could engage with distinct social and cultural formations. Secondly, using the analogy of "a play within a play" Bozzoli argued that the Witwatersrand regional system was the most appropriate model for understanding "the South African social formation as a whole."[466] This interest in both the particularities and the generalisability of the Witwatersrand history was consistent with Wits University's view of its value as a national, and continental resource.

[463] "Workshop" in this context refers to the collective event hosted by the WHW organising committee and includes the academic conference, open days and public history days which took place as different segments of one event.
[464] Bonner, "New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa 1977-1994," 979.
[465] Belinda Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," in *Labour, Townships and Protest*, ed. Belinda Bozzoli (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978), 2.
[466] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 4.

The second "Labour Town and Countryside" Workshop took place in 1981. It expanded the local geographic focus from the predominantly industrial Witwatersrand to include the rest of the Transvaal. As the title suggests, the expansion sought to draw links between the countryside, and a growing urban workforce. This link between urban and rural labour was particularly important as an effort to adapt Marxist social history to the South African context because of the links that the migrant labour system created between the typical revolutionary urban "proletariat" and rural areas.[467] Papers focused on the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, the 1940s post World War era and the emergence of South African Congress of Trade Unions, illuminating South Africa's history of Black worker resistance and labour as a site of resistance. This allowed the WHW to emphasis its didactic function in a moment of South African history where the labour movement made a substantial contribution to the renewal of anti-apartheid opposition.

The third 1984 Workshop marked "the HW's coming of age" according to founding member and second chairperson, Philip Bonner.[468] This coming of age marked both an intellectual and stylistic maturity, with the three-day conference, followed by an Open Day under the theme "Class, Community and Conflict: Local Perspectives."[469] The 1984 conference showed a significant increase to 55 papers, many of which were submitted by colleagues and post-graduate students at southern African institutions other than Wits.[470] For Bonner, this expansion reflected the WHW's establishment as a genuinely South African intellectual movement.[471] While still lacking a fully representative racial, gender and academic split, this conference did include a more diverse set of institutions than its predecessors. It also expanded the scope of research to a more nationally representative scale and broadened the historical focus to include "non-class elements in popular consciousness, and for the first time examining seriously [sic] issues of gender and white identities, among others."[472]

[467] Luli Callinicos, "The People's Past: Towards Transforming the Present.," 1986, 5.
[468] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 18.
[469] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 18.
[470] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 18.
[471] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 18.
[472] *Class, Community and Conflict*, History Workshop (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 3.

The question of gender that Bozzoli raises is surprisingly elusive in the literature about the WHW's work, despite the prominent roles that women like Belinda Bozzoli, Lulli Callinicos and, later, Isabel Hofmeyr, played on the organising committee. Although women were subjects in the WHW's research, there is little evidence that feminist modes of analysis held mainstream weight within the Workshop.[473] The relative silence around how the History Workshop as a collective, intellectual space engaged with gender, either as identity or a category of analysis, suggests conformity with the patriarchal academic climate in the University. Bozzoli's early writing on the role of Feminism (or lack thereof) in South African politics, sociology and history attributes this silence in part to the absence of an active South African feminist movement to inspire "original and creative thought."[474]

Controversially, the increase in papers led to parallel panels at the conference and organisers limited attendance at the academic conference to those who presented papers.[475] This choice was seen as counter to the popular mission of the Workshop and maintained an elite, academic bias in terms of the conversations and discussions that the papers generated. This format persisted into future Workshops, and the separation of academic proceedings from its popular activities led to a critique of the WHW for keeping "the thinking and interpretation for the academics, while the singing and dancing are reserved for the people."[476]

The 1984 Open Day had two primary focus areas. Firstly, to create a programme that highlighted popular history as a tool for social analysis. Secondly, to expand the Open Day's audience beyond the predominantly white, middle-class public that had attended in 1981. The 1984 Workshop also added a Popular History day to the programme. The Popular History day followed the academic conference and took on a hybrid conference-workshop format. Titled "Popularising history: limits and possibilities", presenters shared papers and booklets produced by organisations working on popular history projects which included: "'Pre-Azanian commix', a support document for a rural

[473] Belinda Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (April 1983): 139.
[474] Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies," 139.
[475] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 19.
[476] Carolyn Hamilton, "Academics and the Craft of Writing Popular History," *Perspectives in Education* 12, no. 1 (1990): 125.

development project, and radical history syllabuses for schools."[477] These included non-university organisations, although academics were involved in most cases. The popular history projects saw themselves as challenging the established norms of academic history through the formats and languages they used. The Workshop's reasons for separating the academic conference, the popular history day and the open day were primarily logistical.[478] A consequence of this separation, however, was the implicit re-enforcement of hierarchies of knowledge and disciplinary boundaries, that placed the academic conferences as intellectually superior to the open days, with the popular history day as a bridge between the two. An analysis of the Workshop's programmes over the years suggests a trend in the division of labour with the same members organising and actively participating in these three spheres of operation.

The fourth "Making of Class" Workshop in 1987 continued the expansionary trend of the previous workshops. The 87 conference papers presented at the conference included topics which covered a broad scope of regional, political, class and methodological themes. The interest that the WHW had developed in the use of oral history as a methodology is evident in the conference programme, as well as the special edition of *Social Dynamics* published in 1988. The popular history day included eight non-university-based organisations and ended with a panel discussion on "The Politics of People's History."

In 1989, Belinda Bozzoli resigned as chairperson of the WHW.[479] Eddie Webster and Charles van Onselen, also founding members of the WHW, left at about the same time and Philip Bonner, took over as chairperson. This change of leadership, to some extent, also indicated a shift in approach. The fifth Workshop with the theme of "Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid", including all three of the events which had become part of the WHW repertoire, was held in February 1990. According to one report, it was "less centralised and more extensive than the 1987 open day."[480] 1990 saw ninety-two papers presented at the conference and between

[477] Riva Krut and Karin Shapiro, "Johannesburg History Workshop Conference," *History Workshop Journal* 18, no. 1 (1984): 209, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/18.1.209.
[478] Witz, Forte, and Israel, "Epistemological Restlessness: Trajectories in and out of History," 6.
[479] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fifth Annual Report: 1 October 1988 - 30 September 1989."
[480] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fifth Annual Report: 1 October 1988 - 30 September 1989."

4000 and 5000 attendees at the Open Day.[481] The local English media press advertised the open day as a festival for "culture junkies"[482] that would " focus on the lives of ordinary people and to involve them in re-interpreting the past."[483] Despite the growth in the academic conference, it received little coverage in the press clippings available. This, together with the strong emphasis on the entertainment value of the event provide support for the view that outside audiences, experienced the WHW conference, popular history and open days as discrete events. The 1990 Workshop unexpectedly coincided with a moment of significant political excitement and uncertainty, following F.W. de Klerk's 2 February speech announcing the unbanning of liberation organisations and the release of key political prisoners. Political slogans and t-shirts were noticeably visible at the Open Days and Ahmed Kathrada, an ANC stalwart newly released from prison, spoke at the Wits Great Hall on the history of South African Indian resistance politics.

The questioning theme of the sixth WHW 1994 conference; "*Myth, Monuments, Museums – New Premises?"* symbolically represented shifts in the Workshop's academic focus, content and relationship to nation-state politics. Doing away with the Popular History and Open Day and reverting to a mainly academic audience, the 1994 conference saw an increasingly diverse pool of participants, including 28 delegates from other African countries, who had been conspicuously absent from earlier workshops. By this time, just over a decade and a half since the first Workshop in 1978, the WHW had established a new academic orthodoxy carrying a mostly critical view of the nation-state's ability to voice the experiences of those oppressed and silenced under apartheid.[484]

iii. Publications

In addition to the Workshops, the members of the Wits History Workshop also published regularly between 1977 and 1994. This chapter focuses on three genres of the WHW's publications; the edited collections published as a result of the triannual conferences, popular history books that emerged from different WHW projects and newspaper features in the *New Nation.* Each genre highlighted a slightly different understanding of the WHW's public roles and

[481] A. Schiel, "Chopi Marimbas, 'Randlords' at Wits Culture Day," *The Star*, February 5, 1990.
[482] Philippa Garson, "A Campus Field Day for Culture Junkies," *Weekly Mail*, February 9, 1990.
[483] Schiel, "Chopi Marimbas, 'Randlords' at Wits Culture Day."
[484] Witz, Forte, and Israel, "Epistemological Restlessness: Trajectories in and out of History," 5.

showed how various forms of text contributed to what the WHW imagined as a radical revision of South African history and social sciences. [485]

Each of the triennial conferences between 1977 and 1987 resulted in an edited collection of papers. Belinda Bozzoli, as chair of the WHW committee, edited the first three. The fourth, published in 1989 had four co-editors, namely Phillip Bonner, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wilmot James and Tom Lodge. This, too, was read as a continuation of the "pathbreaking" series of collected papers which began with *Labour, Townships and Protest: studies in the social history of the Witwatersrand* (1978).[486] Ravan Press, a radical, oppositional independent publisher established in 1972,[487] published or co-published all the WHW publications discussed here.

Labour, Townships and Protest included ten papers and three appendices, introduced by Belinda Bozzoli. The book was organised into three sections: 'Township life and patterns of protest'; 'Cultural alternatives to hegemony'; and 'Worker experience and action.' Papers were "works-in-progress" and authors retained rights to republish their work elsewhere.[488] Three functions stand out when analysing these edited collections. Firstly, the publications recorded both the work and the organising logic of the WHW. Secondly, they enabled the WHW to disseminate the intellectual and methodological interventions that they engaged in. This explicitly located Wits as part of an international public of History Workshop inspired social scientists[489] and was particularly significant given the Academic Boycott targeted at South African academics in the 1970s and 1980s. Lastly, these editions were forward-looking and served as a resource for future workshops, which should build on one another.

The second WHW publication, *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response* (1979) included 16 papers organised into four parts: Class Relations in the Countryside, Life and Culture in the Towns, Urban Organisation and Resistance, and Literature

[485] Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius, "Radical History and South African Society," *Radical History Review* 46/7 (1990): 13.
[486] J.J. McCarthy, "Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa," *Choice Reviews Online* 28, no. 04 (December 1, 1990): 126, https://doi.org/10.5860/CHOICE.28-2280.
[487] McCarthy, "Holding Their Ground…", 1.
[488] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 35.
[489] As the Journal *History Workshop* demonstrated, there were a number of 'History Workshop' style groups which emerged in different parts of the world.

and Ideology. A small section of photographs, a single poem[490] and the addition of a back-index can were cursory gestures towards the WHW's goals of writing more accessible histories. Overall, as highlighted by Edward Steinhard's 1985 book review in *Research in African Literature,* this book failed to meet the Popular History goals that Bozzoli laid out in its introduction. The book was not only expensive but written to fit comfortably within the stylistic norms of conventional historical scholarship that popular history sought to challenge.[491] These edited collections are to some extent physical manifestations of the Workshops early conceptualisation of "popular history" as being primarily "a history of the people" (as subjects), rather than "history made attractive and easily consumable" by the people (as audience).[492]

The academic papers and books that made up most of the Workshop's work were, as Steinhart argued most likely to be read by "graduate seminars in South Africa's white universities or in Britain and the United States."[493] Although Steinhart makes these observations as a critique of the WHW, the production of multiple texts circulating among different publics is consistent with how different elements of Wits have engaged with their public role across time. Other titles that fitted this genre included *Class, Community and Conflict* (1987), as well as a special edition of *Social Dynamics* (Dec 1988) and the ***Radical History Review*** (Vol 46/7, 1990) consisting specifically on contributions by WHW authors. From the outset, these edited collections were seen as a testament to the "rigorous and well-disciplined research" that early WHW members felt "must be the foundation of all interpretations of social systems."[494]

Luli Callinicos's *Gold and Workers: 1886 – 1924* (1980)[495] marked the introduction of a distinctly new form of text emanating from the University, under the auspices of the WHW. Its first print run included 1000 copies distributed to schools, trade unions and educational organisations, as

[490] Modikwe Dikobe, 1983. "Dispossed" in *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal : Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).
[491] Edward Steinhart, "Review: Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response by Belinda Bozzoli," *Research in African Literatures* 16, no. 1 (1985): 136.
[492] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 4.
[493] Steinhart, "Review: Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response by Belinda Bozzoli," 137.
[494] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 4.
[495] Luli Callinicos, *Gold and Workers*, A People's History of South Africa v. 1 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981).

a well as individual readers.[496] Although employed by the WHW, Callinicos was not an academic appointment at Wits, and *Gold and Workers* did not have a format designed for a formal academic audience. It included many photographs and images, short paragraphs with multiple subheadings, poems, and simple, concise English, intended to be intelligible to second language readers. Callinicos's dedicated her first volume to the people "who have the capacity to make this knowledge powerful."[497] This dedication, in combination with the stylistic interventions, demonstrates that Callinicos' work was designed to empower Black people to engage with intellectual questions of race, ethnicity and class as well as to find representation within the history of the South African nation-state. The *Peoples History of South Africa* series included two additional volumes; *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886-1940* (1987) and *A Place in the city: the Rand on the eve of Apartheid* (1993). Other books in this genre include *Johannesburg: Images and Continuities A History of working-class life through pictures 1885-1935*[498] and *We have done with Pleading: The women's 1913 anti-pass campaign*[499] and were developed from research and publications produced by Callinicos and other WHW academics. The titles all presented 'academic' material, in a more reader-friendly format. Beyond this, the WHW's popular history publications were also meant to reduce the time between "what historians think and what the public reads."[500]

In 1986, the of WHW launched the Write Your Own History (WYOH) Project in collaboration with the South African Committee on Higher Education (SACHED). The project imagined itself as a step towards establishing "participatory, non-discriminatory and non-authoritarian practices" for a different type of education system.[501] The project worked with three organisations to produce

[496] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report for the Three Years Ended December 31st, 1984" (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1984), 12.
[497] Callinicos, *Gold and Workers*, front matter.
[498] Peter Kallaway, *Johannesburg : Images and Continuities : A History of Working Class Life through Pictures, 1885-1935* (Braamfontein, South Africa: Ravan Press, 1986).
[499] Julia C. Wells, *We Have Done with Pleading : The Women's 1913 Anti-Pass Campaign*, History Workshop Topic Series; 3. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991).
[500] Ruth Edgecombe, "Review: Luli Callinicos, Gold and Workers 1886-1924," *Reality* 13, no. 6 (November 1981): 1.
[501] L. Witz, "The Write Your Own History Project," *Radical History Review* 1990, no. 46–47 (January 1, 1990): 378, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1990-46-47-377.

popular histories of their communities.[502] Experiences from these organisational case studies – located in Kagiso, SOWETO and Driefontein – were compiled in *Write Your Own History* (1988), also published by Ravan Press. The book hoped to act as a guide-book for other communities looking to write their local histories. Representatives of the community research groups presented at the History Workshop held in February 1987. The *WYOH* publication was a text designed to incorporate different producers of history. Although no community-histories were published as a result of the guidebook, it marked a late shift in the WHW's approach to producing history. Despite these shifts, the significance of professional historical skills was still emphasised strongly.[503]

Furthermore, WHW produced a weekly series of feature articles in the *New Nation* newspaper. The series was called "New Nation, New History" and regularly ran from 1986-1989. The series concentrated on southern African history, as well as histories of resistance and revolution further abroad.[504] *New Nation* was a prominent, new-generation newspapers in the 1980s, along with the likes of *South*, the *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekblad*, as popular struggles of an emergent Mass Democratic Movement intensified. These papers represented an open challenge to the status quo by challenging not only government but also established institutions in society, such as the role of the judiciary and educational institutions, like Wits. Once the WHW "felt [it] had temporarily exhausted [its] resources," features were published on an ad hoc basis in 1990. The series became a book titled, *New Nation, New Histories* and reportedly sold well amongst the readership of the newspaper.[505]

iv. The Audience, Popular History and Conceptualising "the People"

Part of what makes the WHW useful for understanding Wits' public roles during the 1970s and 1980s is that the Workshop actively sought to reach beyond the traditional boundaries of the institution to build new relationships with communities that the Wits had mostly ignored or

[502] Although in a later discussion based on unpublished work, Witz reflected that no published community histories had been produced as a result of WYOH. Leslie Witz, "What Is Our History? The SACHED / WIts History Workshop Write Your Own History Project, the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum and the University of the Western Cape Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Archive." (unpublished, 2017), 1–31.
[503] Witz, "What Is Our History?," 17.
[504] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fifth Annual Report: 1 October 1988 - 30 September 1989," 9.
[505] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fifth …", 9.

exploited. The Wits History Workshop was not the first experiment with "Popular History" in South Africa, and it continues to develop conceptually and practically in South African social sciences today. Callinicos (1986) explicitly referenced workers' education materials from the 1930s and 1940s as well as a People's History series published by the South African Institute for Race Relations in the 1940s.[506]

The WHW saw its intervention initially as inserting popular subjects into South African Historiography. The WHW sought to, both literally and figuratively, fill in the gaps in mainstream South African historiography by "recreating Witwatersrand history from a grassroots perspective."[507] Given the circumstances in the mid-1970s, this limited sense of popular history as of history "of the people" may have been a necessary precursor for the more inclusive forms of popularisation that emerged from of the WHW and other local history groups in the 1980s. These more inclusive forms primarily included expanding the audience/consumers of historical texts through new formats of presenting history at the Open days, through plays, slide shows and "public and popularised lectures", as well as through later texts like Callinicos's *People's History of South Africa*.

To better understand the public role that WHW played, it is necessary to unpack how it conceptualised "the people" it sought to serve. Bonner, in 2010, reflects on the project as giving "voice to the mass of so-called 'ordinary' South African who had been silenced by white and bourgeois domination and by the privileging of class over race."[508] In 1981, Bozzolli described this group as not "the governed" but "the administered" subjects of the state[509] who were in practice "the common man … subordinate groups of society … factory or mine workers, domestic servants, traders, diggers, the unemployed or the 'marginal.'"[510] Members of the WHW continuously identified non-racialism as a central tenet of their work. The prominence of black African workers as the imagined benefactors of the WHW's work is evident through their

[506] Callinicos, "The People's Past: Towards Transforming the Present.," 2. Mentions authors: Sol Plaatjies, Albert Nzula, E.S. Sachs, Bill Andrews, Clements Kadalie, Albert Luthuli, Jack and Ray Simons and Eddie Roux
[507] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 3.
[508] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 16.
[509] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 8.
[510] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 3.

centrality in the WHW's most successful publications. This dominant image overshadows other examples of the WHW's work which looked at a broader cross-section of southern African class and organisational politics.[511]

The above phenomenon is partly explained by the high quantity of Black worker focused research that the WHW produced as well as the significant contributions that the WHW made in terms of producing content and methodology to study Black working-class experiences. It also speaks to a less tangible characteristic of Wits' publicness. Despite evidence that the WHW researched and addressed multiracial audiences, white people as research subjects were often overlooked. This reinforced the dominant image of white, educated people reaching-out to elevate the abject, uneducated, Black masses. This understanding of the public roles of WHW or Wits more broadly arguably draws on persistent historical attitudes of racial superiority and paternalism towards Black bodies in the University, as well as the elite, intellectually exclusive tendencies within the Workshop itself.

Some members of the Workshop began to recognise the limits of exclusively using class as an analytical frame by the 1981 conference.[512] Over time other frames of analysis were slowly introduced, but class remained the central organising logic of WHW projects. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the discursive division that developed within the WHW between radical "worker experience" and what was considered "populist" history – which included histories that centred Nationalist or racially-centred experiences.[513] The WHW's strong scepticism of African nationalism was informed on one level by dissatisfaction at the state of political and economic freedoms in post-independent African countries in the mid-70s and 80s. Academic history as a professional and objective discipline was at odds with popularist history, and the WHW emphasised the need to maintain a clear line between the two. With the strengthening of Black

[511] A sample of these works taken from titles at the 1978 and 1984 Conferences include: "Law and authority on a nineteenth century mission station in Natal" Meintjes, S. (1984), 'A concurrence of interests?': businessmen, proletarians and housing in Springs, 1948-1960." Gilfoyle, D. (1984), "Building a community: Jews in Johannesburg, 1900-1014.", Krut, R. (1984), "Policemen, pimps and prostitutes: Public morality and policy corruption, Cape Town, 1902-1904." Hallet, R. (1978), "Merchant, magnates and monopolists: Johannesburg and the Shipping Rong, 1902-1904" Solomon, V. (1978), "The state, the Johannesburg municipality and the reserve army." De Villers, R. (1978)
[512] *Class, Community and Conflict*, xvii.
[513] Luli Callinicos, "Popular History in the Eighties," *Radical History Review* 1990, no. 46–47 (1990): 286, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1990-46-47-285.

Consciousness in the 1970s and the re-emergence of Congress-aligned popular struggles in the 1980s, it became increasingly difficult for the WHW to maintain this distinction and respond to the real experiences of 'ordinary' people in South Africa. In addition to adapting to changing political temperament, the WHW arguably fell into the trap of misrecognising that although "academics writing popular history are often able to 'raise critical questions and probe sensitive issues which may or cannot be asked by individuals committed to political groups'… the academic production of popular texts [has] its own political content and bias." [514] At the 1987 conference, Tom Lodge argued that the "the criteria of academic excellence, are perhaps, only secondary to the task of integrating a historical consciousness in the daily lives of the oppressed majority." This statement was, unsurprisingly polemical and showed "the dangers of popular excess" for those members who still thought of the WHW as a primarily academic project.[515]

The WHW's steadfast commitment to class analysis in light of mounting critique was in part a function of identity politics. As a group of predominantly male, middle-class academics writing from the relative safety of Wits University, the Marxist framework allowed WHW academics to justify their role in an anti-apartheid movement that was becoming increasingly critical of the role of white people who, despite ethical objections, continued to benefit from the Apartheid regime. The political challenge that the WHW faced draws strong parallels to Eddie Webster's analysis of white responses to Black Consciousness at a 1974 NUSAS lecture. Here he differentiated between white liberals who used nonracialism as an avoidance tactic for engaging with Black Consciousness – the "despairing liberal" who saw Black Consciousness as the end of multiracialism and the "New Radicals" who reconciled Black Consciousness's separatist tactics as a necessary organisational tool.[516]

While the content of the work presented at the first WHW conference successfully challenged "crude assumptions about the monolithic nature of the great unskilled mass of black workers,"[517] the WHW's early audiences were still predominantly white and middle class.[518] One History

[514] Robert Edgar quoted in Carolyn Hamilton, "Academics and the Craft of Writing Popular History," 126.
[515] Witz, "The Write Your Own History Project," 387.
[516] Moss, *The New Radicals: A Generational Memoir of the 1970s*, 98.
[517] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 12.
[518] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report for the Three Years Ended December 31st, 1984," 11.

Workshop annual report identified the primary mode of advertising for the first Open day as the press, the University publicity office, or the like" which managed to draw "unexpected audience of 100 people in 1981."[519] The report conveys a sense of surprise at "the lively interest in the past amongst blacks [sic] and whites alike",[520] suggesting that the demand for alternative forms of history education was coming from a diverse cross-section of society. This multi-racial awareness of the audience of the University's texts is rare through the history of the institutions, with the potential exception of the *Bantu Treasury Series* discussed in chapter three. Although it would take time for the WHW to grow its popular audience, efforts made in this regard demonstrate at least a partial shift from the established trend of white Wits academics writing about Black subjects for white audiences.[521]

By 1984, invitations to the Open Day were sent to a wide range of organisations[522] and a number of these organisations received support for transport to and from Wits campus. In total between 3000 and 4000 people attended the 1984 Open Day, resulting in a day that was "fully multi-racial, pioneering and fun." [523] This massive increase took the WHW organisers by surprise. "An ad hoc decision was made to open the Great Hall and run a spontaneous programme in there" which catered for large sections of the overflow throughout the day.[524] This indicated success in terms of the goal of bringing new audiences into the network of circulation of both the WHW and Wits University. The organisers of the Open Day also noted that "[g]roups that attended have been keen to join the Workshop and use its available media themselves. The University has thus come to be seen as a place where resources are available for use by non-university groups, and this is

[519] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report for the Three Years Ended December 31st, 1984," 11.
[520] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report …", 11.
[521] One example of this approach to History writing at Wits was Leo Fouché tenure as Professor of History at Wits, elaborated in Bruce Murray, "Leo Fouché and History at Wits University, 1934–1942," *African Historical Review* 48, no. 1 (2016): 85, https://doi.org/10.1080/17532523.2016.1235765.
[522] The full list of organisations listed in the WHW Report are;
"Actstop (Action to stop Evictions), South African Institute of Race Relations, S.A. Council for Higher Education, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee, Learn and Teach, Federated Union of Black Artists, Council of Unions of South Africa, Federation of S.A. Trade Unions, Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of S.A., S.A. Allied Workers Union, Young Christian Workers, Black University Workers Association, Council for Black Education and Research, Teachers English Language Improvement Programme, Teachers Action Committee… and many others." History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report for the Three Years Ended December 31st, 1984," 11.
[523] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 19.
[524] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report for the Three Years Ended December 31st, 1984," 13.

something the Workshop values extremely highly."[525] Bozzoli viewed the location of the Open Day on the University campus as "important from the University's point of view since it made concrete some of the abstract promises made by Wits to involve itself with the community."[526] This explicit link between the public engagement of the WHW and the public roles of the broader University helps understand how a micro-study of a relatively small cohort of the University can provide insight into the Institution's publicness.

Organisers were surprised by requests from workers for simultaneous translation of the presentations into Zulu. The fact that this request was surprising, despite the Workshops' focus on the experiences of people who were predominantly not English first language speakers, points to the Anglo-centric framework within which the extended reach of the University's public was imagined.

The organisers of the 1987 Open Day suggest that the WHW continued to try to develop the inclusivity of its popular history approach within specific parameters. Bonner and Lodge directly addressed the fact that "Careful planning" was needed for "the Workshop [to] reach all strata of society as deeply divided as that of South Africa" and discuss some of the logistical tactics deployed to try and reach new audiences.[527] The recognition that "mere press publicity" and the practice of bussing in specific organisations, would not be sufficient to create the type of diversity which the Workshop organisers aspired to, reflects an intentional attempt to change the composition of the Workshop and by extension the University's audience. According to Bonner and Lodge, the 1987 Workshop's audience was "as large and as varied in interest and affiliation as we could have hoped"[528] and indicated a shift in the atmosphere of the 1987 Open Day from the "euphoric and celebratory culture" of previous workshops to "purposefulness and determination." [529] This type of reflection suggested attempts to respond to some of the critiques levelled against the Workshop and to shift the Open Days from being seen as an

[525] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Report for the Three Years Ended December 31st, 1984,"13.
[526] *Class, Community and Conflict*, xix.
[527] Phillip Bonner and Tom Lodge, "Introduction," in *Holding Their Ground*, ed. Philip. Bonner Hofmeyr, Isabel., James, Deborah., Lodge, Tom. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), iii.
[528] Bonner and Lodge, "Introduction," iii.
[529] Bonner and Lodge, "Introduction," iii.

opportunity for outsiders to be allowed into the University, to one where participants and community members could act on claims to the space of the University.[530] The fact that these character shifts of the Open Days coincided with the WHW actively getting involved in cultural and media productions beyond purely academic papers see the stark lines between the academic and the popular starting to blur and suggests and evolution of WHW's perception of its public roles.[531]

Through WYOH, community members became 'producers' of history, rather than source material for an academic publication.[532] The majority of the participants in the project (WYOH) were young people, despite efforts to attract "rural communities, students, women, urban communities, elderly people and youth."[533] Similarly, the *New Nation, New History* series represented a shift in content, audience and sense of authorship. Unlike Wits' long tradition of engagement with newspapers like *The Star and the Rand Daily Mail*, which tended to provide academics' 'expert' opinion or the institutional position on a particular topic, *New Nation, New History* responded to topics and themes of interest expressed by their readers through letters and did not include authors' by-lines. This last, seemingly minor detail – the omission of an identifiable author – was a particularly pertinent shift away from academic and journalistic norms. Especially given the tensions within the WHW that created a sense of dichotomy between intellectual and academically sound standards and the popularly accessible content; the apparent shift from fore-fronting ownership and expert knowledge vis-à-vis making information accessible was a small but meaningful shift in the WHW's engagement with a non-university readership. Hamilton[534] notes that this shift also created challenges around the accountability of the content produced, with potentially positive (i.e. protecting authors from increasingly repressive state

[530] Bonner and Lodge, "Introduction," vi.
[531] Bonner and Lodge, "Introduction," iv.
[532] Witz, "The Write Your Own History Project," 384. See Witz and Rousseau for more detail on the limitations of this intellectual shift. It is interesting to note that although members of these groups presented works in progress at the 1987 Open Day, no published or completed written accounts of any of these community histories were produced through the Write Your Own History Project (WYOH).
[533] Witz, "The Write Your Own History Project," 379.
[534] Carolyn Hamilton, "Academics and the Craft of Writing Popular History," 126.

censorship) and negative (i.e. readers not being able to verify or compare different sources of historical narratives) implications.

The WHW also engaged audiences directly on behalf of the University[535] and ran several History Teacher's Workshops (1988 and 1989), Saturday morning classes and talks for high school students from Johannesburg townships and Transvaal towns further afield (1987). These educational endeavours positioned the WHW as a resource available to the public for information and education. The teacher's workshop, in particular, had a diverse reach, with a strong potential multiplier effect. These workshops sought to equip teachers to teach the prescribed national school curriculum in a way which incorporated the perspectives promoted by the WHW.[536] Given that a number of the teachers who attended the second workshop in 1989 had their attendance funded by their schools shows demand for these teacher's conferences.

The massive growth of the Open Day audiences and the formal recognition and funding from the University in 1984, saw the WHW shift from something of a counter-public within white South African academia, to something of a mainstream voice that challenged the orthodoxy represented in History by the South African Historical Journal. By 1984, it seems that the WHW had gained sufficient legitimacy to posit a new normal for white academia. The WHW and its approach to modern history was regarded in critiques from the mid-1980s onwards[537] as setting the new standard for social history in South Africa. This, in turn, led to an argument that the WHW's position within Wits' elite, liberal institutional context limited the radical potential of this group of academics. Much like Wits' reputation as a "protest-only" institution, the WHW's

[535] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fourth Annual Report: 1 October 1987 - 30 September 1988" (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1988), 8.The History Research Group contributed to the Wits Autumn School by offering two lectures, one by Tom Lodge on the 1946 Mineworks' Strike and one by Isabel Hofmeyr on oral and written records of the 1854 siege of Makapans Gat. A screening of the tape and slide show "Fight Where We Stand" was also included in the Autumn School Program.

[536] History Research Group, "Wits History Workshop Fourth …", 4. The first teachers' workshop ran along the theme of "the impact of the mineral discoveries on southern Africa" and had a total of 70 teachers from a mix of public and private schools as well as teacher training colleges. The 1989 'teacher's conference' expanded to 85 teachers from the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vaal regions and covered a much broader scope of "Perspectives on 20th Century South African History."

[537] Nicky Rousseau, "'Unpalatable Truths' and 'Popular Hunger:' Reflections on Popular History in the 1980s," in *Out of History: Re-Imaging South Africans Pasts*, ed. Jung Ran Forte, Paolo Israel, and Leslie Witz (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2016), 53–54.

position at Wits University, with access to both local and international networks of social and financial capital, enabled the WHW to develop an oppositional identity for itself without needing to practically challenge the underlying class and racial hierarchy of South African society at the time.

v. Towards a Conclusion

Reflecting on the Wits History Workshop at the 2010 "Life After Thirty" colloquium, Neelardri Bhattacharya described WHW as an attempt to "break the boundaries between academics and the people."[538] This chapter has shown that this attempt was successful in certain ways but also highlighted the University's tendency to bolster these boundaries, sometimes unwittingly. The core challenge to WHW's conceptualisation of popular history was a question about who should determine the content of new histories – whether academic or popular. This debate highlighted "the notion of academics as the producers of history and the wider community as its consumers" as problematic.[539] This challenge pushed the collective WHW committee to a position which fundamentally challenged the inherited self-referential authority of the white, professional academy. The shifts that are observed in the late 1980s and from 1994 onward are an attempt by the next generation of WHW academics to resolve the internal tension between the historically established idea of Wits' public roles, and its aspirations to a more democratic way of making History.

This thesis has shown that, across its history, Wits University has defended its perceived role as a socially benevolent, informed and unselfish actor. Organisationally, this trust in the University is based on a perception of academics as experts, held accountable by non-academic members of Council, who govern on behalf of the community. While the WHW did effectively introduce innovations in how academic history mediated the boundaries between the university community and those outside the ivory tower; these innovations came with their own set of limitations. Its promotion of oral history methodologies, WYOH and popular publications of

[538] Bonner, "New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa 1977-1994," 129.
[539] Carolyn Hamilton, "Academics and the Craft of Writing Popular History," 125.

"People's History" coexisted with a loyalty to the traditional role of the university as the gatekeeper of academically legitimate and socially useful knowledge.

The Workshop did not initially imagine 'Popular History' as amplifying the voices of the historically dispossessed or changing the dominant voices within the academy.[540] This chapter has found three main implications of the WHW on Wits' publicness. Firstly, it opened new avenues for representation and recognition of working-class people in academic studies. The mediated nature of the WHW's popular engagements reassured the authoritative position of university training and professional academia over socially useful knowledge, but they did nonetheless open the possibilities for a more democratic politics of knowledge between the University community and Black communities that it had previously ignored. Secondly, by focusing on histories of protest and resistance, WHW's work deepened the oppositional identity that began to be associated with the University in the 1950s. Thirdly, it helped to cement the University as a facilitator and leader of social change. Although the information driving conceptual shifts in understanding South African history, and social malaise came from off-campus, projects like the WHW saw their role as transforming this information into knowledge that could be used to educate both the communities that they worked with and the University's more traditional publics.

In terms of the public role that members of the WHW imagined themselves playing; it is interesting to see how particular terms developed with different conceptual implications as the Workshop evolved. In the edited collection of papers from the *Labour, Townships and Protest* (1982) conference, Belinda Bozzoli comments on participants' intention to "decolonise" South African historiography. While Bozzoli does not elaborate on the conceptual understanding of the decolonisation in that context, the work being done by the WHW at the time suggests that the role of decolonisation in 1978 was to include narratives that viewed Black South Africans as independent historical actors, into mainstream South African historiography. Reflecting in 1994, Phillip Bonner describes the WHW's goal of "The decolonisation of South African history" as including "the composition of its practitioners … its content, its methodology and its scale of

[540] Bozzoli, "Popular History and the Witwatersrand," 4.

production."[541] While Bonner's reflection frames decolonisation as a stable concept across this fifteen-year time frame, the shifts in content, methodology, community participation and engagement that this chapter has explored suggests a historical misremembering of the WHW's use of the term to better fit the group's aspirations in the early 1990s. Bonner's claim that the WHW had achieved this goal of decolonisation, particularly in terms of "the composition of its practitioners"[542] and its methodology, had already begun to face critique by the mid-1980s. Relative to the contemporary frameworks of 'decolonisation', which include the South American and South Asian Subaltern Schools of the mid to late 1990s,[543] and the Black Consciousness revival of the term during the 2015 protests, a different evaluation of the WHW's successes is certainly possible.

In identifying the particular forms of publicness which began to emerge at Wits from the 1970s to 1990s, the establishment of the Wits' self-referential authority and seemingly neutral definitions of academic rigour and excellence was articulated and then challenged.[544] For the WHW this independence included both the State (as per the debates about Academic Freedom) but also popular politics more broadly. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the democratic transition approached, the WHW was essentially forced to embrace new forms of popular and public history to remain relevant in progressive academic circles. These new forms included a much less antagonistic approach to nationalism, the production of Congress-aligned popular history of struggle and liberation, as well as a shift towards public history in the form of museums and monuments. To some extent, this moment represented the historical subject that the WHW had introduced into formal history, morphing from a studied-subject to a responsive and active citizen, making demands of the institution which were counter to the University's institutional culture. The changing nature of participation and citizenship was primarily the result of external influences on the University – the political transition in the early 1990s and alternative models of

[541] Bonner, "New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa 1977-1994," 979.
[542] Bonner, "New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa 1977-1994," 979.
[543] *Decolonizing the Westernized University : Interventions in Philosophy of Education from within and Without*, 211. Walter Mignolo, "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity," in *Modenologies. Contemporary Artistis Researching Modernity and Modernism* (Barcelona: Actar Coac Assn Of Catalan Arc, 2009)Walter Mignolo, "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity," in *Modenologies. Contemporary Artistis Researching Modernity and Modernism* (Barcelona: Actar Coac Assn Of Catalan Arc, 2009), 42.
[544] Rousseau, "'Unpalatable Truths' and 'Popular Hunger:' Reflections on Popular History in the 1980s," 65.

making popular history. In particular, the People's History Project at the University of the Western Cape established in the mid-1980s challenged the WHW's approach of differentiating between subjects and author/owner/creator.

The *Tomorrow Begins at Wits Today* survey commission by Vice-Chancellor du Plessis in June 1976, serves as one example of how other overlapping sectors of the University, were also interested in understanding and expanding the nature of Wits' publicness. The survey's results booklet noted that the "the University is not just the way that [the individual parts that constitute it are] organised,"[545] and its sample methods gave insight into which communities Wits was interested in engaging in the mid-1970s to the early-1990s. The sample structure suggests that similar social theories as those promoted by the WHW influenced its design. There is a geographic overlap with the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) area, a class consciousness within the University community articulated through the inclusion of various staff associations, and clear concern with a British-international academic public. This last point highlights a continuity with the University attempt to view itself as part of an international (Western) academic public despite South Africa's tenuous position in the international arena and shifting local political conditions. The absence of any academics from Africa or the Global South shows that Wits' international imagination was still firmly rooted in former metropolitan academic networks. Lastly, the differences in response rates between academic staff, administrative staff and students suggest different attitudes towards belonging within the University community itself. The response rate for academic staff was much higher in both numerical and proportional terms than that of administrative staff and students. While closer analysis of the data is needed to understand the implications of these differences fully, one potential implication is that academics felt more confident in communicating their views and opinions about the University. *Tomorrow Begins at Wits Today* shows that by 1978, the new WHW was not the only part of the University that was interested in expanding the scope of communities that the University engaged. The responses to the survey indicate, however, that the action of reaching out to incorporate more views, does not immediately lead to changes in senses of belonging or ownership by various publics.

[545] Perceptions of Wits Group, *Tomorrow Begins at Wits Today: The Role of the University in a Changing South Africa*, 3.

Despite its persistent critiques of Nationalist and Populist histories, the WHW, like the University at large, imagined a particular type of national public. The WHW articulated its' ideas about South African history by producing and actively circulating texts to a much wider audience than usually engaged with the University. Their contribution to a 'progressive national history', took on a didactic form through the teachers' workshops/conferences which intervene directly into different public education systems, and the *People's History of South Africa* series published in the *New Nation* newspaper. Luli Callinicos' description of the Reader's Digest's "comprehensive, full-colour *Illustrated History of South Africa"* as a "major commercial enterprise", which could be sold as "the real story" again highlights members of the WHW shaping a new norm for South Africa's national narrative. This new norm included much of the Africanist and social history approaches promoted by the WHW and its international academic networks.[546]

The dominance of the WHW's brand of social history also imposed silences on particular avenues of South African history. At Wits, pre-colonial southern African studies are perhaps the strongest example of this potentially unintentional silencing. Despite an initial interest by WHW academics like Bonner and Delius, and Wits' international reputation as a site of studying early southern African societies, the field ended up relegated to departments of archaeology and physical anthropology. In focusing on the agency and experience of "ordinary" people in the 19th and 20th centuries, often through a lens of ethnic and class identities, South African historiography did not develop the tools to provide the same type of historical agency to previous generations of southern African people. This happened despite papers on pre-colonial history being presented at WHW conferences.[547]

The History Workshop's relationship to an international academic public also carries strong echoes to that of Wits University. Like the University itself, the intellectual and organisational origins of the Workshop originated out of developments in British Higher Education. Despite the WHW local emphasis on content and subject matter, it also saw itself as part of a broader international public of social historians, particularly within the school of Radical Marxist social sciences. The WHW's network of partner organisations and donors, the international journals

[546] Callinicos, "Popular History in the Eighties," 285.
[547] Krut and Shapiro, "Johannesburg History Workshop Conference," 209.

that its authors contributed to and the reflections of long-time individual members of the Workshop, are evidence of this.[548] The idea of the University playing a role in a global, Western (and particularly Anglo-centric) networks of knowledge and scholarship has been consistent in Wits' history and its definition of its role in society. This privileging of the United Kingdom and the United States in the Workshop's international relationships continued into the early 1990s. Bozzoli's preface to the published works emerging from the academic conference contextualised the WHW as seeking "to establish in South Africa a tradition with roots in European and American society." She listed the British History Workshop, the American Radical Historians Organisation and the Swedish "Dig where you stand" movement among its parallels in "advanced industrial societies", where capitalist dominance had a similar silencing effect on the experiences of "the poor, dispossessed or marginalised.[549]

With the hindsight of over fifty years since the WHW's establishment, there were clear limitations to this experiment's attempt to widen the scope of the University's publics. Hall and Kros's 1994 article *New Premises for Public History in South Africa,* affirms Bozzoli's 1988 view that "in the extremely repressive atmosphere of the 1980s, it is probably no exaggeration to say that the History Workshop's activities had about them 'an air of daring'."[550] In terms of Wits' publicness, this "air of daring" arguably faced similar limitations from the institution's white liberal orthodoxy as Wits' "protest-only" identity, discussed in previous chapters. The WHW's daring propositions while perhaps limited by its institutional location within Wits University were later refined, challenged and developed by both 'professional' and 'popular' intellectuals across the country.

Michael Warner argues that publics are not created simply through exposure to a text, but in part through how they are addressed and able to interact with the text. For Wits University, the WHW marked a shift not only in terms of the forms of texts produced by University academics but how and where engagements with these texts took place. These new texts show an attempt to think differently about how discussion, debate and understanding happened at Wits and with an

[548] Bonner, "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium," 20.
[549] *Class, Community and Conflict*, xiii.
[550] Belinda Bozzoli, "Intellectuals, Audiences and Histories: South African Experiences, 1978-88," *Radical History Review* 46/7, no. 1 (1990): 219. Cited by Andrew Hall and Cynthia Kros, "New Premises for Public History in South Africa," *The Public Historian* 16, no. 2 (April 1994): 27, https://doi.org/10.2307/3378803.

expanding audience. Examples included changing academic discussions and debates within the WHW and its academic conferences, as well as the different types of physical platforms for discussion and expression that the open days provided. These new forms of textual engagement in the university space, draw interesting parallels with the new forms of public protest which emerged at Wits in the 1950s. However, even with the expansion of the Open Days from 1987, the WHW did maintain an emphasis on the University as having a professional monopoly on validating useful knowledge. This was demonstrated through adherence to particular forms of elite discourse, the emphasis of fitting experience to theory, and the separation of 'the people' and the producers of History.

In line with Shireen Ally's analysis of the Sociology Department of Wits during the same period,[551] the Wits History Workshop convened and addressed new publics as acts of power. The oppositional voice which WHW was able to articulate into the academic sphere, gained traction because of, rather than despite the elite power associated with White, English speaking universities. Wits the institution, simultaneously held space for potentially polemic projects like the History Workshop (so long as they adhered to the academic standards and rigour of the academe) while continuing with its original function linked to the expansion and development of the mining-industrial complex. This relationship underpinned not only a substantial part of Wits' funding and general support base, but also the very same economic system that exploited the workers and politically disempowered people, which projects like the WHW, SWOP and the Perspectives of Wits Survey tried to service.

[551] Shireen Ally, "Oppositional Intellectualism as Reflection, Not Rejection, of Power: Wits Sociology, 1975-1989," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 59, no. 1 (2005): 66–97, https://doi.org/10.1353/trn.2005.0045.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

Image 10: FeesMustFall protesters outside Wits Great Hall on 7 October 2016, after what would have been the 10th General Assembly of the University was called off. Photograph by Leon Sadiki

7. Conclusion

This thesis has tracked changes and identified continuities in the public roles of the University of the Witwatersrand over the last century. It has done so by focusing on four moments that shaped the public roles of the University; namely, the establishment of the University (1910s and 1920s); debates about the role of Black staff and students (1930s and 1940s); the Academic Freedom protests (late 1950s onwards) and the emergence of the Wits History Workshop (from 1976 to the early 1990s). These four highly charged moments of public engagement show that from its inception, Wits University has been concerned with three primary public roles: providing technical and professional training; generating and authenticating expert knowledge and shaping people's ideas of citizenship. There have, however, been marked shifts across time at Wits about the practical and conceptual understandings of these three roles. The shifts happened in response to changes in the political landscape of the South African – and, more specifically, Johannesburg – society, as well as the accumulation of traditions of practice and ideology within the University.

Through its explorations of these moments in Wits' history, the thesis shows that a wide range of actors have discussed and expressed expectations of the University across time. The diversity of these actors, their expectations and their levels of influence on the University demonstrate the dialectical relationship between 'the university' and 'society'. The preceding chapters have shown that what everyday discourse might imagine as 'the university', consists of collectives and individuals whose actions sometimes act in concert and diverge at other times. Similarly, the society and publics that Wits interacted with include a range of different groups. Despite the racialised and segregated nature of South African public life different forms of circulation and address were at play connecting these groups at different historical moments.

In 1922, Wits University received its degree-granting status from the Union of South Africa's government. This achievement represented a shift in public attitudes about both the necessity and capacity for education in the Witwatersrand. The debates by the Johannesburg University Movement (established in 1904), as well as parliament's motivations for reallocating the Beit

Bequest to the University of Cape Town (1916), brought to the fore the main criticisms and restraints which Wits' predecessor institutions faced in gaining recognition as a university. Records of the 1916 Johannesburg public meeting suggest that the Witwatersrand Education Council imagined the proposed university to be a top-down initiative by a South Africanised, English-speaking elite to develop a sense of place and civic culture. The successful establishment of the University shifted Johannesburg's civic and educational culture from that of a mining backwater to an aspiring imperial city. Despite the elite bias of this vision, access to the University was viewed as an avenue for opportunity and prestige for the white citizens of Johannesburg. In a way, its establishment enabled these (white) citizens to participate in the type of deliberative public life that democracy requires. The eventual concessions from the Union government provided a sense of justice to Johannesburg citizens who felt marginalised by coastal political elites' profiting off the labour and wealth centred in the Witwatersrand region of the country. From its inauguration the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg took on public responsibilities which went beyond the exclusively technical training associated with the South African School of Mines and Technology and other predecessors. In this context, parallels exist between the emergence and role of Wits in early twentieth century Johannesburg and the shaping and disciplining role of other new civic institutions of culture and governance such as the Johannesburg Art Gallery (1910) and City Hall (1916). Settler-colonial elites in these decades viewed these institutions as an attempt to uplift the "colonial philistine"[552] by emulating cultural institutions of the British Empire. Although the definitions of what this upliftment meant have changed over time, the University has been associated with the notion that it is an institution that facilitates and enables upward mobility and modernisation throughout its history.

In becoming a university, Wits positioned itself as an educational institution accessible to all who sought to develop themselves and contribute as productive citizens to the newly established Union of South Africa. In this period of late-Imperialism, the vision and objects outlined in the "Our University" supplement (1923) point out how Wits laid claim to an international legacy of the university as a site of elite production and knowledge authority. The University positioned

[552] Carman, *Uplifting the Colonial Philistine: Florence Phillips and the Making of the Johannesburg Art Gallery*.

itself as contributing to the establishment of a regional and national identity that could integrate and compete in the networks of the British Empire, by educating local white citizens according to the norms and standards of predominantly British universities. At this point, Wits was a nominally non-racial institution. In line with British liberal ideology, it promised access to opportunity and upward mobility for all people regardless of race, sex or religion as long as they were academically competent. The promise of open access and non-racialism was captured in the University's charter and emphasised in Jan Hofmeyr's inaugural speech as Principal of the University College in 1919.[553] In practice, however, these ideals failed to materialise for those who were not white and middle or working class. For decades it remained highly racialised, reflecting the institutional structures of colonial and apartheid society.

This takes us to the second moment of significance dealt with in this thesis: Wits' gradual inclusion of Black staff and students into the University. Black South Africans were effectively excluded from Wits until 1936, despite legally being allowed to attend the University. Even though Wits established the second Bantu Studies (later African Studies) departments in South Africa, and began publishing the Bantu Treasury Series in 1935, the sources from this period suggest that the University mostly treated Black South Africans as subjects of study rather than potential students or educators. The "Our University" supplement's focus on "native labour", as well as courses offered for "those who are brought into touch with the native races"[554], attest to the dominance of this view. The Native Recruiting Corporation and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association's funding of the Department reinforce its instrumentalist approach.[555] While the establishment of the Bantu Studies department, its journal *African Studies* and the Bantu Treasury series were considered socially progressive within white liberal circles at the time, it is clear that Wits University was not a non-racial space in its first decades. Wits promoted itself as a place for white, predominantly male, citizens; some of whom were interested in resolving what was then referred to as "the native problem."[556]

[553] "Class or wealth, race or creed" Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, 298.
[554] Rheinallt Jones, "University of the People."
[555] Le Roux, *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: Between Complicity and Resistance*, 55.
[556] Clement M Doke, "Bantu Studies, Getting at the Natives' Mind, Rand as Firld for Research."

The shift towards the gradual inclusion of Black people as members of the University occurred in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As Bruce Murray noted, the first major demographic changed coincided with World War II, although given the various barriers to inclusion in specific departments, this process of inclusion was piecemeal and almost negligible. Black South Africans started entering the university because of a drop in demand for education by white men who volunteered for the war, and partly because of the state's demands for more professionally trained Black South Africans. The main sources for this thesis provide very little insight into who these Black students were, and this is an area that deserves more attention in further studies. The available documents emphasise the medical school where a limited number of state scholarships were available for black Africans, postgraduate studies for graduates from international universities, a selected number of Arts students, the admission of Black students to the law faculty in 1943[557] and the first two Black engineering students in 1967.[558] Wits' first Black academic appointment, and later PhD, was Dr B.W. Vilakazi, who occupied a junior position as a language assistant in the Department of Bantu Studies from 1935 to 1947. Although the inclusion of Black people into Wits life was slow and limited, it did allow staff and students a degree of inter-racial interaction and relations which did not exist in other sectors of segregated South Africa, as both Nelson Mandela[559] and Philip Tobias'[560] reflections on their times at Wits attest. The late 1940s saw a further shift towards more radical, leftist and anti-segregationist politics within the Wits community, as former members of the armed forces returned from World War II.[561] This period of the late 1930s to 1959 is what is often referred to by Wits as 'the open years' where the institution had established a public image as a bridge between Black and white communities. The debates that emerged around Vilakazi's appointment, in particular, demonstrate that a lively and active Black counterpublic existed at this time. Despite discussing issues related to the University's role in public life, and its image as a bridge between segregated

[557] Bruce Murray, "Nelson Mandela and Wits University," *Journal of African History* 52, no. 2 (2016): 274.
[558] Bozzoli, *A Vice Chancellor Remembers*, 102.
[559] Murray, "Nelson Mandela and Wits University," 279.
[560] Tobias, *Into the Past: A Memoir*, 55.
[561] Murray, "Nelson Mandela and Wits University," 280.

racial worlds, Wits, for the most part, was satisfied limiting its imagined discursive public to white South African society.

The third moment in which this thesis is interested is the debates at Wits which accompanied the National Party's strict legal segregating of Higher Education in the post-war decades. The first signs of the state's intention were the establishment of the Holloway Commission (1953) followed by the 1953 Separate Universities Bill that morphed into the Extension of University Education Act of 1959. Chapters 4 and 5 detail the dynamics of performance and protest about Academic Freedom, and how these dynamics influenced the idea of Wits as a site of social activism, particularly after 1959. In the Academic Freedom protests, Wits made university autonomy its central concern, and along with UCT, advocated for the university's right to self-determine who was admitted and taught, what was taught, and how. In the post-war decade, the narrative which dominated Wits' description of the interracial-relationship between students was one of "academic integration with social segregation." In this period Wits expanded to include more Black people into the skills development function of the University, but it continued playing a public role which affirmed white people as superior citizens despite the rhetoric of equality.[562]

The contradictions evident in the policy of "academic integration with social segregation" were raised by some within the Wits community, as protests against the Extension of University Education Act (1959) began to mount. The most vocal of these came from NUSAS affiliated students who argued in the *Wits Student* that students should mobilise not only for Academic Freedom but against Apartheid more broadly. Despite these internal debates, Wits limited its civic activism specifically to compartmentalised matters of education and prioritised the communication of a concise anti-interventionist argument into spaces of white public deliberation.

The Academic Freedom protests saw Wits utilising a range of rhetorical and performative tools to assert its independence as a matter of public import. Independent of the extent that these protests demonstrated a genuine commitment to the idea of racial equality, Wits introduced new

[562] Murray, "Nelson Mandela and Wits University," 280.

modes of organising and protest into the realm of South Africa's white core public sphere. The academic protest march, class boycotts, and the first General Assembly of the University, all indicated a shift away from traditional modes of communicating with the state and citizens, such as the letters to the press, private government correspondence, public lectures and entertainment events that previously dominated. Although ultimately unsuccessful in their protests, in the 1950s, the 'open' universities were allowed the space within the limited confines of Apartheid's racialised whites-only democratic system to oppose and protest against the state without the threat of violent retaliation. The forms of protest that Wits deployed in the late 1950s has influenced what university authorities and broader society considered acceptable or proper forms of academic protest since. Contestation about the kind of protest deemed acceptable within particular spaces resurfaced during the South African student protests between 2015 and 2017. Attitudes towards violent protests in the 1950s and 1960s indicate that very few Wits students supported any form of violent protest. This thesis has shown that Wits University was able to establish these norms of public engagement between the University and society. Wits' position in the formal, white public sphere in early Johannesburg contributed to the University's norm influencing power.

The Academic Freedom protests involved a shift in content as well as form. These protests were the first time that University representatives spoke publicly about their contribution to shaping the nation and citizenry as distinct from their role in the state's vision of national development. Although Vice-Chancellor Bozzoli noted a change in university-state relations when the National Party came to power in 1948,[563] the opposition to the 1956 bill saw a fundamentally different type of public disagreement between the state and universities. In previous periods the University's commitments toward the core functions of moral and professional training were in line with the state's notion of national development. The political shift, which started in 1948 and culminated in the Extension of University Education Act (1959), created a tension between the University's idea of national progress and state-supported separate development policies. The

[563] Bozzoli, *A Vice Chancellor Remembers* 149.

1950s protests, and their memorialisation in the 1960s and 1970s, strongly influenced perceptions of Wits as a hotbed for anti-apartheid organising from the mid-1970s onwards.

The fourth significant moment that this thesis highlights is Wits' expanding its sense of public to include Black communities. In this moment, Black communities were predominantly conceptualised as a receiving (rather than deliberative) public. The Wits History Workshop (est.1976) was an early example in which Wits academics actively sought to challenge the existing relationships between Wits' predominantly white publics and Black communities, particularly in the geographic vicinity of the University. Vice-Chancellor Charlton's commissioning of "The Academic Plan" (1979) and the *Tomorrow Begins at Wits Today* survey (1985) are further examples that Wits had begun to recognise the University's historical deficiencies in imagining the public it served. These new endeavours sought to include "the view from below" (a term imported from the Wits History Workshop's Thompsonian social history rhetoric) to solve what Vice-Chancellor Charlton identified as an "education crisis."[564] Wits Council's 1984 decision to officially begin readmitting Black students to Wits, regardless of ministerial approval, was an unprecedented shift institutional understanding of the University's public roles.

Tracking Wits' relationship to the three public roles (training, expert knowledge and citizenship) enables this thesis to identify the development of critical traits of Wits' publicness across time. Although these three roles have mainly remained constant across time, the University's understanding of the expectations associated with them has shifted with the political and social contexts revealed by these historical moments. These shifts emerged as a product of both an internal sense of institutional culture and tradition developed over the University's lifespan, as well as external demands by groups such as the government, industries represented on Council, significant donors to the University and the English press. In the period examined in this thesis, Wits' publicness shifted from being grounded in the promise and aspiration of a bustling city of empire to a confident, self-referential sense of moral and intellectual authority by the 1950s, although it operated almost exclusively within a white public sphere.

[564] Perceptions of Wits Group, *Tomorrow Begins at Wits Today: The Role of the University in a Changing South Africa*, 1.

A core conceptual shift Wits' sense of its publicness identified in this thesis was the differentiation University leaders began to make between the idea of "the nation" and "the state" in the mid-1950s. This distinction positioned two elements of Wits' institutional character in tension with one another. The protests against government intervention evoked a sense of modernity that deviated from an earlier emphasis on productive citizens working with or for state-defined national objectives. In doing so, Wits positioned itself as defending certain fundamental principles of universal knowledge; compelling some members of the Wits community to think about their positions as members of an international, Eurocentric academic public and their positions as South African citizens. While the state viewed Wits' association with international, Western academic standards as aspirational, in the pre-apartheid era, in the 1950s these standards surfaced a tension between the University's national and international responsibilities. The Van Wyk de Vries Commission into White Universities (1976) clearly articulated these concerns. Wits' foundational links with British academic networks set a precedent which influenced Wits' understanding of modernity and progress. The flow of generations of Wits staff and students, as well as research across imperial networks, made international links a significant part of Wits' local identity. In addition to these collegial networks, much of the research that helped to establish Wits as a capable and respected research institution in its early decades targeted a primarily international audience. Dr Raymond Dart's work in palaeoanthropology and technological innovations in collaboration with British funded mining houses are two examples which stand out in the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, Wits' institutional identity in the fifties faced greater risk than other South African universities who were more aligned with Nationalist ideas of progress and development.

Both before and after the 1959 Extension of University Education Act passed, Wits emphasised the importance of members of the public actively engaging with issues of choice around education. This was demonstrated first, by the Johannesburg University Movement's focus on gathering regional support for the University. As Wits developed a stronger sense of an institutional culture or identity, these choices became more specific; the move to English only exams (in the 1930s) and "academic non-segregation" in the 1940s and 1950s. By the 1980s students and academics who worked at Wits, whatever their personal political positions might

have been, were associated with and affected by the institutions' reputation as a hotbed of political dissent. In the University's attempt to defend its institutional autonomy, this idea of choice was an essential part of its' argument; whether white citizens choosing to attend a segregated university or a Black student who chose an open university over an 'ethnic' one. Conscious or not, one role Wits played in the South African public sphere was to encourage thinking about education as a political and social choice, rather than a purely economic-driven upskilling process.

It is possible to trace changes in how ideas about the community or people Wits serves changed over time. Despite Rheinhallt-Jones declaring Wits "The University of the People" in the *"Our University"* supplement (1922), this thesis has shown that at each stage of the University's history its efforts at inclusivity and publicness have been carefully controlled by established members of the institution. The dynamic between the University's desire to serve or respond to the needs of its community, which is integral to the founding narrative of Wits, and its responsibility to provide society with 'the truth' through expert knowledge, led to increasing tensions as political and educational environments evolved. A central belief underpinning this dynamic is the idea that universities are sites where expert knowledge is produced and stored, and that this knowledge is socially and economically useful for society. In Craig Calhoun's analysis of the university as a public good, it is this idea that elite control of knowledge can still be utilised for the public benefit that gives members of the university community the authority to crowd out other potential voices on some issues of public discourse. This thesis found that despite contestations around who the University's 'people' were, there is little evidence of an active challenge to Wits' value as an authoritative site of knowledge production. Even during the Van Wyk de Vries Commission in the mid-1970s, where the "extracurricular" activities of Wits students were deemed disruptive and dangerous by the Commission and the state, accusations against Wits' focused on the behaviour tolerated by university authorities, not the institution's academic standard.

This perception of universities as objective guardians of truthful knowledge shapes the formation of their publicness relative to other institutions of the core public sphere. The Kantian ideal of the university as a place for reasoned debate, where established knowledge can be challenged by newer findings, appeals to the ideal rational-critical debate that participatory democracy

aspires to. Theoretically, this invitation to critique enables multiple components of the university to hold different views, some of which directly oppose one another. Public representations of the institution are then assumed to be informed by the strongest and most convincing positions. Thus, interactions between the-university-as-institution and broader society allude to this veracity, often overlooking the gatekeeping powers within universities, which this thesis has shown obstruct or promote particular positions. These gatekeepers take the form of various decision-making bodies within the university; themselves influenced by a combination of individuals' personal political and ideological beliefs, as well as interactions within their work environment. In the case of Wits University, this complex dynamic between the views of the-University-as-institution and the-University-as-individual-members enabled the University to build a form of publicness that opposed University Apartheid underpinned by a unifying defence of institutional autonomy. The less commonly held opposition to Apartheid because of the regimes' racial discrimination, persisted because specific individuals (e.g. I.D. MacCrone) and groups (e.g. NUSAS and the SRC) were able to establish their views as representative of the University *qua* institution at certain times, despite dissenting positions within the University. The progressive image of Wits as a hot-bed for anti-apartheid organising persisted despite the University's ultimate acquiesces to the Extension of University Education Act (1959) and pre-existing segregationist practices as well as academics, council members and students who supported Apartheid and the fact that the University continued to receive support financial support from the apartheid state.

Over the period under examination, Wits' *qua* institution shifted from trying to convince its imagined public of why it *will be* useful[565] to a sense of self-referential authority which could exist independent of local recognition. This authority seems to grow as the institution aged. Professor I.D. MacCrone's reflections that Wits mobilisation around the Academic Freedom protests "had, in a sense, acquired a soul [for the University], where previously it had been merely a body and an intellect"[566] underline a meaningful shift in the University's internal narrative of its public role 1959. MacCrone's emphasis on the 'soul' is particularly significant in understanding the

[565] Illustrated by the University Movement's public meeting (1916) and the Our University supplement (1922)
[566] *The Golden Jubilee of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*, 57.

construction of Wits University's publicness. It implies that this self-referential authority was not merely a matter of intellect but also a product of an authoritative moral position. For the 'open' universities, this moral high ground was connected to Western European ideas of universal rights and liberal education; however, flawed those ideas were in practice. The implications of this self-referential authority relative to the state have already been discussed.

The Wits History Workshop (WHW), established in 1976, is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how this phenomenon of self-referential authority manifested itself, not only at the macro-level of institutional-public rhetoric but also in the practices of small collectives of university members. The Workshop began as a group of Wits academics on the margins of both the national and institutional academic spheres and by the 1980s had established itself as a new orthodoxy for how left-leaning academics should engage with South African history. Despite the History-from-Below movement's interest in including previously excluded social histories in the practice of South African history writing, the WHW's view of the role of professional academics in the process of writing popular history carries strong echoes of the self-referential authority that this thesis argues Wits accumulated over its history. The WHW's interest in writing popular history had two distinctive aims: firstly, to include subjects they considered 'ordinary people' and secondly, to make this history more readily available through new forms of media considered more accessible than traditional academic texts. Although ground-breaking in several ways, popular history at Wits engaged with deliberative Black publics in limited ways. The University and the professional historian remained the mouthpiece through which authoritative knowledge emanated The WHW's conception of 'the people' involved in its popularising efforts demonstrates the ubiquity of this self-referential authority by academics at Wits. For the WHW in this period, 'the people' were conceived of through discourses of class and gender, but WHW avoided political lenses aligned with African nationalist movements and Black Consciousness despite the popularity of these movements within anti-apartheid circles and struggles at the time.

Woodruff Smith points out that not all members of the core public sphere are equal in terms of their influence on public deliberation.[567] Today Wits is one of South Africa's most prestigious and influential universities. This position was established through the financial, social and political capital that its particular brand of publicness enabled. In particular, its identity as a historically white institution; with strong western, Anglophone international networks, combined with its image as a hotbed of anti-apartheid activity have contributed to this. This position aligns with Craig Calhoun's analysis of American Higher Education where historically prestigious universities are better placed to reproduce their prestige, even as access to universities becomes less elite.[568] In South Africa, Rekgotsofetse Chikane accurately describes the aspirational view of many young people who see historically white institutions as the primary pathway to reach financial security and socio-political success.[569] Wits' public roles and responsibilities over the last century have impacted not only how it operates in relation to the world around it, but also how communities beyond the University have shaped their ideas and expectations of what an ideal South African university is imagined to be. This image is one which has been developed and synthesised over the last century. Wits' ability to draw on an oppositional history as an 'open' university, as well as its mainstream position as part of South Africa's white, core public sphere, allows it a degree of agenda- or norm-setting power within higher education. This power exists even though Wits' experience as one of South Africa's first, English-speaking, white universities makes it representative of only a relatively small proportion of the current South African academic public and, through it, the University maintains a strong elite position relative to most South Africans. The ability for norms to be set and accepted in public discourse, based on elite experience, presents a problem for democratic systems which claim equality for all citizens.

The tensions and public outcry over the disruptive and violent modes of protest that took place on campuses like Wits during the student protests between 2015 and 2017 is one example of this collective imagining and norm-setting. Similar tactics, issues and protests had been a regular feature of the university landscape at historically black institutions around the country for at least

[567] Smith, *Public Universities and the Public Sphere*, 10.
[568] Craig Calhoun, "The University and the Public Good," *Thesis Eleven* 84 (2006): 15.
[569] Chikane, *Breaking A Rainbow, Building a Nation*, 122.

a decade, without garnering the kind of public attention or response that one day of protest at Wits did. At a more structural level, several contemporary metrics used to determine the quality of a university institution such as international university rankings and the academic ratings of staff members are strongly associated with historically white institutions. For Calhoun, this kind of elite bias drives the higher education sector further and further away from the idea of a collegial and publicly-interested environment.[570] While hierarchy and ranking in the Higher Education System is not inherently a problem, this thesis suggests that Wits and other HWI institutions carry a disproportionate level of influence in how the public roles of universities are imagined in South Africa. This influence enables them to set a standard for how mainstream public discourse promotes expectations of what universities can and should do in South Africa. There are spaces where more nuanced understanding and analysis of the higher education system do exist, but these discussions do not always surface and survive in mainstream public fora. This disproportionate influence is not necessarily intentional, or the result of an overt denial of other intuitional experiences but happens, in part, because the prominence of institutions like Wits crowds out other understandings of universities in public imagining. This crowding out matters because it creates a disconnect between the institutions represent the majority of the country's academic and student experiences and public imagining of universities' roles and responsibilities. This thesis aims to raise awareness of how the over-representation of institutions like Wits has become normalised in public spaces of deliberation and, consequently, to encourage more nuanced public engagement with the expected public roles of South African Higher Education.

It would be challenging to write about the public roles of Wits University today, without writing about its designation as an 'open' university in the pre-apartheid period. Authors like Paul Maylam, Xolela Mangcu, Malegapuru William Magoba and Bruce Murray have highlighted the limitations of the 'open' university legacy and its' claims that "[f]rom the outset, Wits was founded as an open university with a policy of non-discrimination - on racial or any other

[570] Calhoun, "The University and the Public Good," 33.

grounds."[571] Despite these cautions, the public image of 'open', historically white institutions, like Wits (especially in comparison with strictly segregated historically white institution, associated for example with descriptors like "the birthplace of Apartheid"[572]) is one which I would argue is seen as almost naturally aligned with the Human Rights discourses supported by the new South African Constitution. This is at least true in many of the spaces for formal public deliberation constituted by the post-repressive-regime state.[573] This thesis does not dispute that Wits University did interact and engage with Black communities in ways distinctive of the 'open' universities – see for examples chapters 3, 4 and 5 – but a contemporary position which ascribes or assumes a level of benevolence and social trust to these historically elite institutions, by whoever is thought of as 'the nation' runs the risk of perpetuating a 'mainstream' which is exclusive of the majority of the body politic. It is a position which assumes elites, by virtue of their education and social networks, have the expertise to act in the interests of people and communities, as collectively imagined in mainstream spaces of public discourse. My study of the public roles at Wits University ultimately fails to find much significant historical evidence to support this position. The political moment of decolonisation, reform and re-imagining that is happening in South Africa as this thesis is written provides a strong incentive for new ways of looking at South African history through the lens of the institutions which have fundamentally shaped experiences and ideas about public and collective culture. By exploring Wits' public roles and responsibilities as products of a cumulative historical process, this thesis offers a platform for renegotiating and reimagining public engagement with public institutions. It also shows how histories of institutions like Wits need to understand better their fraught relationships with Black deliberative publics in order to meaningfully develop the inclusive national public sphere that post-Apartheid society imagines for itself. The inadequacies of institutions like Wits and UCT to productively engage with the protests that erupted in 2015 were symptomatic of institutions of

[571] University of the Witwatersrand, "History of Wits," 2019, https://www.wits.ac.za/about-wits/history-and-heritage/. Date Accessed: 5 September 2018

[572] Marius Fransman, "Stellenbosch was bedrock of apartheid," http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/stellenbosch-was-bedrock-of-apartheid--marius-fran

[573] Carolyn Hamilton, "Uncertain Citizenship and Public Deliberation in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Social Dynamics* 35 (2009): 359.

the core public sphere that, knowingly or not, limit their imagined publics more narrowly than the publics they claim to serve.

Image References:

Image 1: Academic staff and church leaders protest in support of students demanding free tertiary education at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, October 7, 2016. REUTERS/Siphiwe. Source: SibekoImage 2: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-safrica-protests/south-african-student-protesters-demand-university-shutdown-idUSKCN1270MN Date Accessed: 1 November 2019

Image 2: Organogram of major role players. Habib, Adam. *Rebels and Rage : Reflecting on #feesmustfall*. Jeppestown, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2019. Pp. xvii.

Image 3 An early sketch of Wits University buildings on the Milner Park campus, circa 1921. Unknown author. page 9 of A5 pamphlete. SAIRR: Education (AD8431kb, 32.1, File 1,Universities: Univ. of the Witwatersrand: gen 1921-1922). Wits Historical Papers, Johannesburg.

Image 4: Portrait of Dr B.W. Vilakazi. http://witspress.bookslive.co.za/blog/2016/04/28/benedict-wallet-vilakazi-the-father-of-nguni-literature-honoured-with-order-of-ikhamanga/ Date Accessed: 1 November 2019.

Image 5: Cartoon included in a pamphlete opposing the Extension of University Education Act. Beryy (1929). Academic Freedom Collection. Wits Central Records.

Image 6: A procession of 2000 professors, lectures, student and embers of Convocation marches to City Hall on 22 May 1957. Shear, M. (1996) *Wits: A university under Apartheid* pg. 29

Image 7: : The full declaration that hung on the pillars of the Great Hall before the first General Assembly of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Murray, The Open Years p.319

Image 8: A pamphlete distributed as part if the 10th anniversary of the Extionsion of University Education Act. University of the Witeatersrand. (1969) Academic Freedom: To the people of South Africa. Academic Freedom Collection. Wits Central Records, Johannesburg.

Image 9: Posters for Wits History Workshop Events put on display for the 40th anniversary of the Workshop's establishment. Wits History Workshop. "40 Years of the History Workshop - Wits University." Accessed September 24, 2019. https://www.wits.ac.za/history-workshop/events/previous-conferences-and-workshops/40-years-of-the-history-workshop/.

Image 10: : FeesMustFall protesters outside Wits Great Hall on 7 October 2016, after what would have been the 10th General Assembly of the University was called off. Leon Sadiki **(2016)** "Wits Postpones General Assembly after Talks with Protesters Fail." Citypress. Accessed November 1, 2019. https://www.news24.com/citypress/News/wits-postpones-general-assembly-after-talks-with-protesters-fail-20161007.

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