

Creative writing students accuse Kirk of censorship

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A CENSORSHIP row has broken out after Church of Scotland's publishing arm refused to print a book which includes swearing.

Students on one of Scotland's leading creative writing courses have accused St Andrew's Press of refusing to publish their final work unless colourful language and blasphemy are removed.

The Glasgow University course, which counts Louise Welsh

(pictured) and Zoe Strachan as graduates, has produced annual short story collections for the past few years.

However, the latest tome, *Let's Pretend: 37 Stories About (In) Fidelity*, may not see the light of day.

Publishers told the students they would not handle the job unless they edited the use of God and Christ as

expletives in three stories. They also asked the writers to remove the words 'f**k' and 'c***' in eight others.

Ann Crawford, head of publishing at St Andrews Press, also told student editor

Susan Kemp that one story, *Devout Observer* by CJ Begg, may not be accepted at all because it was 'offensive to religions'.

It also was suggested that some Church of Scotland members would react 'very negatively' to the work.

Ms Kemp said the colourful content had been discussed at a previous meeting, but described the firm's new position as censorship.

The Kirk says the original agreement made clear that 'overly or gratuitously offensive material' that ridiculed other faiths or denominations would not be accepted. Spokesman John MacGill added:

'Unfortunately, when the student representatives submitted the finalised stories to the publishing committee, it became apparent that some of the

authors did not appear to have been told that there were any guidelines.'

But the students say no such guidelines were issued and are looking for new funding to produce the book elsewhere.

