

# **The Invisible Hand: Zambian Literature and (Self) Censorship from the Colonial to the Post-colonial Period**

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## **Abstract**

It has been argued, with a degree of justification, that literature and society are interlinked in such a way that they mutually affect each other. In other words, literature is largely a product of, reflects, and also influences, the society which produces it. Hence literature can change with or be shaped by specific socio-cultural epochs. The influence of the times on literature is reflected in terms of choice and types of theme, characters, and language. This paper proceeds from the premise that this is true of the case of Zambian literature. Starting from the literature written by Zambians during the colonial periods, in particular the works of Stephen Mpashi, to works written during the various eras of post-colonial Zambia, the paper seeks to demonstrate that Zambian writers engaged in self-censorship in order to get published, and in order to be politically correct according to the prevailing socio-political environment. This is in part because the predominant socio-political narrative influenced the type of literature written and published. The paper also tackles the question

of whether self-censorship is still a major factor in the writing of Zambian literature.

## Introduction

The term ‘Zambian literature’ can be as slippery as the term ‘African literature,’ and may also attract as much heated debate as the concept of “African literature”. It is therefore necessary, from the outset, and in order to build a foundation upon which the rest of the paper will lie, to clearly state the delimitations of this paper. In other words, this paper first needs to tackle the question of what, in this context, is meant by Zambian literature.

It is the position of this paper that in its broadest application, the term Zambian literature refers to all forms of literature written by Zambians in English as well as any of the many indigenous Zambian languages. For the purposes of this paper, however, most of the texts referred to will be those written in English, which is the official language of business in Zambia. There will also be occasional reference to texts in local languages, where necessary. During the colonial period, there were very few published works written in English by Zambians, among them Enock Kaavu’s novel *Namu Siaya at the Mines* (1946) and Andreyia Masiye’s *The Lonely Village* (1950).

It may be argued that censorship, in its broadest application, predates the invention of writing. However, with the invention of writing censorship became a critical intervention by the State and the Church. Of the situation in England. Cuddon (1991: 127) says some forms of censorship began to be introduced soon after printing was invented. He adds that both political and religious authorities, wary of the power of the printed word to spread sedition and heresy, made proclamations against seditions and heretical

works under Henry VII in 1529. Cuddon (127) adds that the British monarchs “were particularly concerned about the importation of foreign books” and that the situation was no different on the European mainland as well, leading to the mushrooming of underground and illegal printing presses. He further adds that the proclamations against what was perceived to be seditious or heretical material continued for another 450 years.

The censorship was extended to theatre, as Cuddon (1991: 128) states:

Censorship and control of the theatre, plays and performers were established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Some companies of players were attached to the court to noble households, and there were also wandering troupes of players who had no patrons. In the interests of public order some controls over stage performances were in operation by c. 1550. The licensing of individual plays began in 1549 (or earlier). By an act of 1572, all players (actors) were deemed ‘rogues and vagabonds’ unless they belonged to a baron of the realm (or somebody of higher rank), or were licensed by two justices.

Cuddon indicates that the Puritans, who observed strict moral rules, were vehemently opposed to all types of theatre and “regarded the stage as immoral” (129). He adds that in 1642, the Long Parliament “prohibited all dramatic performances” and the theatres were closed (129). Hodgson (1988: 53) sheds more light on theatre censorship in England, stating that a system of political control over theatre started with the appointment of a Master of the Revels, in the time of Henry VII: “The Lord Chamberlain later assumed responsibility for suppressing heresy and sedition in theatre texts, and for preventing forms of misbehaviour at performances. Successive Licensing Acts, the first under James I, then

in 1713 and 1737, together with the Theatres Act of 1843, reinforced his power, which included the issuing of licences for halls and theatres, and giving permission for the performance of new plays” (Hodgson 1988: 53). Since then, of course, censorship in England – for both literary and theatrical texts - has evolved dramatically, manifesting itself in a variety of forms, although it could be argued that the situation is much better than it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There is, as a matter of fact, hardly a society with no form of censorship in the broadest sense of the word.

Generally, however, censorship is more pronounced and is more readily associated with totalitarian and repressive regimes. Communist countries, for example, tended to be totalitarian. During the communist era, for example, hardcore communist countries – such as the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Albania – as Cuddon (1991: 131) posits, “were extremely careful about what they would allow to be published, and equally careful in their control of the importation of foreign books, papers and magazines”.

It is fallacious, however, to assume that censorship only occurs in totalitarian or repressive states. Even nations classified as democratic or champions of freedom have experienced, and still do experience, one form of censorship or other, if not on political grounds, for instance, then perhaps on moral or religious grounds. Books have suffered a lot of censorship throughout history, especially from the time printing was invented. Censorship is therefore a worldwide problem. As Margaret Bald acknowledges in *100 Banned Books* (1999: xi), over the centuries there has been an “incredible range of books and authors whose works were suppressed” but hastens to add that the censorship has been “absurdly ineffective and useless” in the long run (xi).

It is wrong to assume that nations or societies deemed democratic have had no share of censorship of books, which are the main focus of this paper. Wachsberger, in his Introduction to *100 Banned Books* (1999), could not have said it more poignantly: “Americans live in relative

freedom. Yet censorship also has been a menace throughout U.S. history...” (xi). American texts which were banned at one time or another include, *inter alia*, Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy*, Toni Morrison’s *Bluest Eye*, and John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. Even the world-acclaimed literary masterpiece by Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was not spared by the long arm of censorship. As Inge indicates, the novel “was once barred from certain libraries and schools for its alleged subversion of morality”- and for proof they made reference to the books “endemic lying, the petty thefts, the denigrations of respectability and religion, the bad language and the bad grammar” (1984: 88).

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* lends credence to Bald’s argument that censorship eventually proves “absurdly ineffective and useless”. Once scandalised and vilified, the novel later found a niche among the great books of the American literary canon. Allen Ginsberg’s highly acclaimed poem, *Howl*, went through a similar path: initially rejected and even trivialised, the poem has come to be known as “The Poem that Changed America” and is classified under the all-time great poems of American literature. Shinder (2006: xx-xxi) sheds some light on the censorship history of the poem:

Ginsberg’s poem was at first dismissed by a number of critics. Literary figures such as Lionel Trilling found “Howl” “just plain dull.” With its candid references to sex, drugs, madness, and nightmares, the poem was considered obscene by many, including San Francisco’s collector of customs, Chester MacPhee. In March 1957, he confiscated 520 copies of the book’s second printing under section 305 of the Tariff Act of 1930. Although the US attorney for San Francisco refused to press charges, Captain William Hanrahan

of the San Francisco Juvenile Department did, and condemnation proceedings against “Howl” and its publisher commenced. In his essay, “Horn on Howl,” Lawrence Ferlinghetti outlines the proceedings against his press, and the eventual victory against the state. “In considering material claimed to be obscene,” the presiding Judge Horn stated, “it is well to remember the motto: *Honi soit qui y pense* (Evil to him who thinks evil).”

Apart from the fallacy that censorship – especially for political reasons - is only associated with, or only happens in, totalitarian states there is also the fallacy that censorship is always state-driven. As Karolides argues in *100 Banned Books* (1999: 1), apart from national governments the second common source of censorship is “at the local community level, generated by school board members or citizens, individually or in groups, who attack textbooks and fiction used in schools or available in school libraries”.

There is reason to assume that censorship is driven not just by state machinery, but also by local government, or particular communities, based mainly, but not exclusively, on political, social, religious or moral reasons. In Africa, as in many other parts of the world, the main driver of censorship has been, and still remains, state machinery. What is ironic about the African situation, however, is that the African victims of repression and censorship under the colonial system became the prime censors upon attainment of political power in independent African states. Mapanje (2002: xvii) notes this irony:

After the Mau Mau struggle had led the country to independence, it was Jomo Kenyatta himself who began to hunt down the Mau Mau fighters who were dissatisfied with his rule, calling them “these evil men, vagrants”..Ngugi wa Thiong’o was another

victim imprisoned by Kenyatta for his writings and his political beliefs; Ngugi was released only after Kenyatta's death and in response to worldwide appeals and protests.

In his book *Zambian Writers Talking* (1991), Sumaili captures the problem thus: "During the fight against colonialism the intellectual and the political elite worked very closely in almost all parts of Africa. But after independence major differences seem to have arisen between these two groups of nationalists, and as a consequence, many of Africa's writers have known torture, imprisonment and even exile" (26-7). Mapanje's book is a collection of writings by various Africans while in prison. The book includes writers incarcerated during the colonial period by the repressive colonial regimes, and also those imprisoned in independent African states.

The question that this paper deals with, then, is that of the extent to which Zambian writers have faced censorship, not just during the oppressive colonial era, but also – and more importantly – during the post-independence period. The paper proceeds from the premise that censorship in Zambia, particularly with regard to publications, has largely been "invisible" and that part of this invisibility is due to the fact that much of it is self-censorship. The paper is also concerned with the factors behind censorship and self-censorship particularly with regard to Zambian literature. Further, this paper explores the relationship between historical events and censorship in the development of Zambian literature.

## **Theoretical Context**

In order to best understand the place and role of censorship in Zambian literature, it is imperative to couch the paper in a theoretical context. In other words, what is censorship? What is self-censorship? Censorship is basically the prohibition or suppression of any type of expression deemed objectionable to others. It can, therefore, be externally imposed or

internally imposed – that is, self-censorship. There are many definitions of censorship.

The Global Internet Liberty Campaign (GILC) defines censorship as “the control of the information and ideas circulated within a society” ([gilc.org/speech/osistudy/censorship](http://gilc.org/speech/osistudy/censorship), accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2015). According to the GILC website, censorship can be on religious grounds or on grounds of national security. It also talks of a category of censorship it refers to as “censorship through intimidation” – which can range from threats against individuals to a government threat to monitor all online activities. When citizens know their online activity will be monitored by the state they are likely to exercise self-censorship, not because they have a choice but because they are intimidated. Another category of censorship highlighted by the website is “censorship through consensus” – a situation where adherence to shared social or religious norms is strictly enforced.

Amnesty International defines censorship as:

The supervision and control of information and ideas circulated among the people within a society. It is now understood to refer to the official examination of books, periodicals, plays, films, television and radio programmes, news reports, and other communication media to alter or suppress material thought objectionable or offensive on grounds of national security, obscenity, immorality, violence, blasphemy, slander, libel, insulting to ethnic, religious or other minorities, official secrecy and political danger. ([www.amnesty.org.uk/education](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/education), retrieved on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2015).

Professor Chuck Stone, of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, defines censorship as “the cyclical suppression, banning, expurgation, or editing by an individual, institution,



group or government that enforce or influence its decision against members of the public – of any written or pictorial materials which that individual, institution, group or government deems obscene and ‘utterly without redeeming social value,’ as determined by ‘contemporary community standards’.’ ([courses.cs.vt.edu/professionalism/Censorship/International/censorship.html](http://courses.cs.vt.edu/professionalism/Censorship/International/censorship.html), retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015).

Just as there is a variety of definitions of censorship, there is also a variety of classifications of censorship, aside from the classifications by the GILC as captured above. Some distinguish between corporate, moral, political and religious censorship. (<https://wikispaces.psu.edu/display/IST432TEAM19/Types+of+Censorship>, retrieved on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015) Corporate censorship is deemed to occur when any major corporation makes the decision to implement restrictions on what product manufacturers can produce to reach the free market. Moral censorship is the suppression of materials that the public considers obscene or offensive – such as pornography. Political censorship is when governments or political parties withhold information from their citizens in order to avoid rebellious acts or embarrassment. Religious censorship is when any material that is considered objectionable to a certain faith is suppressed. In their book *100 Banned Books* (1999), Karolides *et al* categorise censored books according to the grounds on which they were suppressed: political, religious, sexual, and social grounds. In their paper entitled “Censorship and Two Types of Self-Censorship” Cook and Heilmann argue that there are two types of self-censorship – public and private ([www.lse.ac.uk/CPNSS/research/currentResearchProjects/.../WP\\_6\\_2.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/CPNSS/research/currentResearchProjects/.../WP_6_2.pdf), retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015). They argued that:

Public self-censorship describes a range of individual reactions to a public censorship regime. Self-censorship thus understood means that individuals internalize some aspects of the public censor and then censor themselves.

Private self-censorship is the suppression by an agent of their own attitudes where a public censor is either absent or irrelevant. Private-censorship therefore involves an intrapersonal conflict between the actual expressive attitudes held by an agent and the set of permissible expressive attitudes that they endorse.

They add:

Private self-censorship captures the idea of personal restraint resulting in the suppression of privately held attitudes; that is, as an individual's self-imposed suppression of the expression of their own attitudes. In this context, private self-censorship is a requirement to adhere to certain standards, derived from, for instance, a set of norms, moral considerations, or decency. Private self-censorship thus understood means that individuals take some idea or consideration to overrule other attitudes they might have. Here we consider two levels for establishing such private self-censorship: either *by proxy*, or *by self-restraint*. Firstly, private self-censorship can be established by an individual's internalization of some external set of values, such as the norms of an association. We describe this as private self-censorship by proxy. Secondly, private self-censorship can be established by an individual's suppression of attitudes in the absence of an explicitly external or public influence, such as when an individual adopts a personal set of values that constrain the expression of their attitudes. We describe this as private self-censorship by self-constraint.

The views of Cook and Heilmann on self-censorship are very pertinent to the discussion of censorship in the context

of works of literature, or literary censorship. Warren, in her article “Censorship in Literature” identifies two forms of literary censorship: first, preventive, which is conducted prior to the publication of a text; and second, punitive, which is enforced after the publication of the text. ([www.hannahwarrenauthor.com/](http://www.hannahwarrenauthor.com/), retrieved on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2015) Self-censorship, of course, is associated with preventive censorship, sometimes, but not always, in order to avoid punitive censorship. Authors therefore engage in self-censorship in order to avoid including what may be deemed offensive by the audience or the authorities, at whatever level.

It may be argued, therefore, that writers of literary works cannot entirely be neutral, at least with regard to dealing with issues of a contentious nature. Achebe (2000:33) argues that there is no such thing as “the innocence of stories”. He came to this conclusion upon reading Joyce Carey’s controversial novel, *Mister Johnson*: “It dawned on me that although fiction was undoubtedly fictitious it could also be true or false, not with the truth or falsehood of a news item but as to its disinterestedness, its intention, its integrity” (34). Self-censorship is part of the reason why literary works cannot be “disinterested” in the issues they deal with, whether based on historical events or completely fictitious.

This in part is due to the fact that literature is a social phenomenon which cannot be separated from the society which produces it. The author agrees, therefore, with Jacob Mwanza, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Zambia, who sees literature as a social institution that:

Literature is a social institution with language as its medium. As a social institution, literature can best be understood in the context of the culture in which it was written – taking into account economic, political and social forces which are at work in a particular historical epoch. There is thus a clear relationship

between society and literature (Foreword to Sarvan 1981: xii).

In his book *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, Obiechina (1975:3) also postulates that there is a relationship between literature and society and that it influences the development of national literatures. Similarly, Soyinka acknowledges the link between society and the writer by stating that: “The artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experiences of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time” (Schipper 1982: 136). In this particular regard this view stands on the same ground as the Historical-Biographical approach to literary criticism which, in essence, “sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of the author’s life and times or the life and times of the characters in the work” (Guerin *et al* 2005: 51).

If literature is inseparably linked to society, so is censorship. In other words, censorship is linked to the society which imposes it, or causes it to occur. Moral censorship, for instance, is determined by the nature of moral issues that characterise a particular society. Similarly, religious censorship depends on the nature of religion in a particular society. In order to understand the intricacies of the role of censorship in Zambia, therefore, it is necessary – and critical – to examine the socio-historical and socio-political contexts in which Zambian literature has developed from the colonial times to contemporary post-colonial times.

### **Zambian Society in Historical Perspective**

Broadly speaking, Zambia’s history may be divided into three main periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. This paper is concerned with the colonial and post-colonial period, especially because of the focus on censorship of written texts. Since writing only came to Zambia in the colonial period, initially through schools established by missionaries, it is only logical to pick the thread up from that period.

As Kelly indicates in his seminal book *The Origins and Development of Education in Zambia* (1999), the colonial period started with the rule of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1891:

The three main periods in the formation of modern Zambia are: mining company rule from 1891 to 1924; Colonial Office rule from 1924 to 1953; and Federation from 1953 to the end of 1963. Each of these periods contributed a different element to the country's development (19).

During this period the book industry – or more specifically the publishing industry – was not developed in what was then Northern Rhodesia. Publishing in Northern Rhodesia started in 1937 when the colonial administration established the African Literature Committee, a quasi-governmental voluntary organization based on the Copperbelt. The Committee was chaired by the provincial commissioner while the secretary was the education officer for Ndola. Other members of the committee included missionary and government-approved African representatives (Chilala 2014: 594).

The African Literature Committee only published the first work by an indigenous writer almost a decade after inception – the 1946 novel *Namu Siaya at the Mines*, authored by Enock Kaavu. However, according to Andrey Masiye, author of the novel *Before Dawn* and the play *The Lands of Kazembe*, Kaavu did not finish the book because he died – and that it was Dr Robinson Nabulyato, the longest-serving speaker of the Zambian parliament, who completed the work. Masiye says Kaavu was a teacher on the Copperbelt and that he met him in Luanshya (Sumaili 1991: 76). It is logical that Kaavu, a Copperbelt resident, would be published by the Copperbelt-based African Literature Committee.

After about a decade, the colonial administration

transformed the African Literature Committee into an intergovernmental institution run jointly by the governments of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi). Hence it was renamed Joint Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland Publications Bureau and operated under the auspices of the Department of African Education. However, the intergovernmental body did not last – it collapsed in 1962, as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland drew to a close. The Northern Rhodesian remnant became known as the Northern Rhodesia Publications Bureau, continuing to function even Zambia’s independence in 1964, although, in keeping with the new political dispensation, it was renamed Zambia Publications Bureau (Chilala 2014: 594).

The Northern Rhodesia Publications Bureau operated on the same basis as the East African Literature Bureau, which was based in colonial Kenya. The purpose of the East African bureau was “to produce a lot of literature that would help the development of the country – books on health and agriculture, and so on” (Chilala 594). In terms of imaginative literature, the Bureau aimed to publish “books to express the African personality – fiction, history, poetry, recording of the past and such things” (594).

One of the prominent Zambian writers of the colonial period was Stephen Mpashi, a civil servant who wrote mostly in IchiBemba. Another was Andreyia Masiye. Generally speaking, however, few Africans were able to have their works published. In part this was likely due to the low literacy levels among the Africans, so it is logical to assume that few of them would be in a position to write books. The colonial government did not invest adequately in education for Africans. Kelly (1999: 25) paints a gloomy picture of the state of affairs:

Under colonialism, as long as the economic base remained mining and European farming, there was no necessity to improve social services for Africans. Indeed there was every incentive

to keep government spending low and taxes down. Hence, by 1931 the government spent only £15,000 on assisting selected mission schools. In 1942 there were only 86,300 children in school, with only 3,000 in the fifth year and 35 in secondary school. A trades school in Lusaka had only 70 pupils in 1948, partly because legislation dating from 1943 prevented Africans from becoming industrial apprentices. The neglect of education was a continuing symptom of official determination to keep avenues of advancement closed to all but expatriates and settlers. By 1958 there were less than 1,000 African children in secondary schools, while only one school provided for entrance to university. In 1951 there were only 4 African university graduates, while by 1961 there were 961 Africans with secondary school certificates and 76 with university degrees. There were only 6,401 primary and 301 secondary school teachers.

With the dawn of independence in 1964, however, the situation drastically changed, with the new government of Kenneth Kaunda placing education at the top of its priority list as a means for national development. They built a lot of primary and secondary schools, as well as the University of Zambia in 1966.

The post-independence era of Zambian history may be divided into three main parts: the First Republic, which ran from 1964 to 1973, and was characterised by multiparty politics; the Second Republic, from 1973 to 1990, which ushered in the one-party system of governance, and, finally, the Third Republic, from 1990 to the present, whose defining moment was the return to multiparty politics abandoned in 1973.

The first and second republics saw a gradual shift of

power to the centre, “whereby the president of the republic, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, and those close to him begun to exercise a very tight control over the economic and political systems through nationalization and the introduction of the one-party state” (Carmody 2004: 37). With the official introduction of the one-party state, as Carmody argues, “the state almost exclusively centred on the person of Kaunda” (2004: 37). The policy of nationalisation led to the departure of a number of multinational companies from Zambia, including some international publishing houses. The government also moved deeper into socialist policies, which involved centralised control of power and national resources. The national philosophy was Humanism, which emphasised the centrality man, or people, in national development.

The scenario only changed when on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1990 Zambia amended its constitution to revert to multiparty politics, thus ushering in the Third Republic. The following year, in November, multiparty elections were held and Dr Kaunda suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Frederick Chiluba of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy.

One of the key features of the Third Republic, apart from the reversion to multipartyism, was the shift towards decentralisation and the adoption of a liberalised economy. The new government abandoned Kaunda’s socialist policies including the philosophy of Humanism, which, in fact, had existed more on paper than in practice. The liberalisation of the economy also saw the return of some multinational companies, with some, like Longman and Macmillan, re-entering the publishing industry. One of the key developments of the Third Republic, however, was the Chiluba’s declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation as State House on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1991, barely a month after assuming power. The declaration, which was later incorporated into the Preamble of the 1996 Zambian constitution, has had far-reaching consequences on the collective conscience of Zambians.

To its credit, however, despite the departure of the



multinational companies from Zambia, the Kaunda government made efforts to ensure that Zambian writers had their books published. In 1966 the government established the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation (KKF) to promote local publications in education as well as general interest. This was after the Zambia Publications Bureau went into voluntary liquidation the same year. KKF had two subsidiary companies – the National Educational Company of Zambia (NECZAM), which was responsible for the publishing function; and the National Educational Distribution Company of Zambia (NEDCOZ), responsible for marketing and distribution of the published materials. With the departure of the multinational companies, namely Oxford University Press, Longman, Macmillan and Heinemann Educational Books, KKF became a monopoly, with little or no challenge to its hegemonous reach. In due course, however, with the economic difficulties that beleaguered Zambia, KKF was reduced to a struggling company, unable to fully meet the demands of the challenges placed on its shoulders.

With the dawn of the Third Republic, however, and the introduction of liberal policies by the Chiluba government, the publishing industry was opened up to other players. Apart from the return of some of the multinational publishing companies that had left at the height of the nationalisation drive, the Zambian publishing industry also saw the introduction of new locally-managed companies. There was also an increase in the number of self-published authors, who took advantage of the liberalised atmosphere.

### **Censorship in Historical Perspective**

During the colonial period, censorship was institutionalised, especially because the colonial authorities were ever wary of rebellion by the oppressed Africans. As Mapanje, the renowned Malawian writer, argues, when the imperial powers divided Africa at the Berlin Conference, they did not anticipate any African opposition to the decisions they made because

they “believed that Europe had the political, economic and cultural muscle to contain any African opposition” (2002: xv). When they encountered opposition, however, as part of efforts to preserve the status quo, however, the colonised territories of the French, Portuguese and British saw, among others, introduced draconian laws. These included variants of Special Powers Acts and Censorship Acts. Thus, as Vernon Mwaanga, renowned Zambian politician and writer of the acclaimed autobiography *An Extraordinary Life* (1982) states, during the colonial era his father’s involvement in politics was enough invitation for the colonial authorities to frequently raid their home. They would search for “banned literature or prohibited literature” (Sumaili 1991: 39).

The censorship during the era of Northern Rhodesia was not just punitive, as demonstrated by the reference to the raids of Mwaanga’s home. It was also preventive, meaning the colonial government put in place measures to ensure that African Literature Centre, the Joint Publications Bureau and the Northern Rhodesia Publications Bureau, only published what was acceptable to the state. In the first place the very fact that these three institutions were established and guided by government policy meant that there was no way any literature considered inimical to state interests could pass through the needle’s eye of the editors. As earlier indicated, for instance, even the few Africans appointed to be part of the African Literature Committee had to be approved by the government.

This was the start of the work of the “invisible” hand of censorship, alongside the “visible” hand. The visible hand was in the legislation and law enforcement when, for instance, the colonial police raided the homes of Zambian freedom fighters such as Kaunda, Nkumbula and Kapwepwe to look for “banned literature” in the manner they invaded the Mwaanga house. The invisibility is due to the fact that what the African Literature Committee and the publications bureau did in selecting texts for publication was a process not known to the public.

This paper therefore argues that censorship may also be categorised into Visible and Invisible censorship. The paper further argues that, since the invisible part of censorship takes place prior to and during the publication process, publishing houses are among the main drivers of invisible censorship – the other being self-censorship, as I shall later endeavour to argue. Further, this paper argues that both forms of censorship are products of, and linked to, the socio-political developments in both colonial and post-colonial Zambia.

As earlier stated, the first Zambian novel was published in 1947 and is attributed to Enock Kaavu. It would be justified to assume that for the novel to be published by the African Literature Committee it was not considered a threat to the colonial authorities. The Joint Publications Bureau of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, on the other hand, was more prolific in publishing African works than the Committee and it regulated local publishing. The Bureau was meant to promote the “cultural uplift” of the indigenous people (Primorac, 2014: 580). It is a matter of conjecture what was meant by “cultural uplift” and who determined the cultural content, but what is certain is that the content was sieved before publication. According to Primorac (580), a 1952 edition of the *Central African Post* reported that the Bureau had in 1951 alone published 21 new titles, mostly in indigenous languages.

Of interest, perhaps, is the fact that one of the renowned Zambian writers of this period, Stephen Mpashi, who by 1955 had published 8 titles in IchiBemba, was in fact an editor at the Joint Publications Bureau, which he joined in 1951. Before joining the Bureau Mpashi had joined the colonial army in 1941, serving in Egypt, Somaliland and Palestine (Primorac 2014: 580). Perhaps his stint in the army inspired his first novel, *Cekesoni Aingila Ubusoja* (“Jackson becomes a Soldier”), published in 1947.

It may therefore be argued that Mpashi was a friend of

the system, and not necessarily in the negative sense. None of his works could be classified as anti-government. They were all politically harmless, especially because they were used in the colonial schools. However, when one considers the fact that, as Primorac indicates, “Mpashi had a relatively free hand as Bureau editor and author” (2014: 581), it would be justified to presume that he exercised self-censorship in order for his works to be accepted by the authorities, whose requirements or publishing guidelines he was conversant with.

In a repressive society such as existed in colonial Zambia, a writer could not be expected to pick on themes inimical to the interests of the state. As noted by Cook and Heilmann, self-censorship is triggered off by public censorship. A repressive regime will put in place measures to enhance public censorship, and since the public are aware of these measures, they will engage in both public and private self-censorship.

In the first and second republics of Zambia citizens engaged in both public and private self-censorship. The country has never had a law meant to effect literary censorship. What have existed, instead, are laws on libel and copyright. However, Zambia has had a Censorship Board specifically meant to sieve the content of films before they were broadcast on national television or in the cinemas. Thus, it was called the Film Censorship Board. Even the Chiluba government maintained this body when it came to power. Thus, for example, on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2000 the Information and Broadcasting Minister, then, Newstead Zimba, appointed a 13-member team to the Film Censorship Board. The appointments became problematic and were opposed by the Zambian centre of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) because of the dominance of government bureaucrats. ([https://www.ifex.org/zambia/2000/10/17/government\\_bureaucrats\\_dominate/](https://www.ifex.org/zambia/2000/10/17/government_bureaucrats_dominate/))

The Film Censorship Board was a public, visible body.

However, despite the absence of specific legislation, or a body, to censor books, the government would use its powers to ban books considered “unacceptable”. During the First and Second Republics, the dominance of the ruling party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Kaunda spilled over into, and affected, every area of Zambian society. The main publishing house, the monopolistic KKF, was named after Kaunda, and he was the patron. This meant he had control over the board and management decisions of the company. There was no way, therefore, under such a Kaunda-centred system, any writer could dare write against the system and hope to be published by KKF.

During his address to the National Conference on Multi-Party Option held on 20-21 July 1990, Arthur N L Wina, one of the architects of Zambia’s return to multiparty politics, presented a paper entitled “A Critique of a One Party State: In Support of Multi-Party Democracy in Zambia.” He said of the one party state situation:

Our experience with a Single Party State has shown that Political Power tends to concentrate in one person – the President and occasionally, but rarely with a few others purely in advisory capacities, and often to be discharged or dismissed in the event of disagreements with him over policy. Note that since the One Party State was introduced in Zambia we had a chronicle of many changes and reshuffles except that of the President. There has been a high rate of turnover of Ministers in all Ministries and State Positions. Surely it cannot be argued that one man in the Presidency has all the wisdom and monopoly of leadership qualities – what would happen to Zambia if his position becomes unexpectedly vacant – would that be the end of the Republic? (Mbikusita-Lewanika and Chitala, 1990: 12-

13).

The environment simply did not allow for the freedom to write anything other than what would be considered publishable by the state-sponsored and state-controlled parastatal, KKF. As the one-party state became more entrenched, so did the authoritarian tendencies of the UNIP government. In such an intimidating atmosphere, a writer had to choose between offending the state machinery or staying neutral or blind to the happenings around him or her. In order to be published, and in order to stay safe, therefore, most writers chose the route of self-censorship. This was a very real phenomenon during the reign of Kaunda and UNIP. Apart from the fear of not being published, many writers engaged in self-censorship for fear of being harassed or perceived as enemies of the state. Speaking in general terms about the African situation, Sumaili argues in his book *Zambian Writers Talking*:

There is no enabling environment on the African continent for writers to think freely and to write freely. There is always a lingering possibility at the back of your mind that there is going to be political repercussion, that there will be a political cost to whatever utterances you make. I think that this has been the biggest obstacle facing writers and thinkers – the lack of an enabling environment, which is free from political pressures. A lot of African political leaders are extremely sensitive to criticism be it direct or implied, and writers naturally fear for their friends and they are forced, in a number of cases, to bend the truth in order to accommodate what I call political exigencies.

As has already been pointed out above, the publishers in Zambia's First and Second republics exercised "self-restraint" as Cook and Heilmann call it. This is a form of self-censorship, except perpetuated by book editors rather than writers. In other words, the editor or publisher asks

questions such as: Should we publish this book? If we publish it, what impact will it have on the society? How will the readers view it? How will the authorities look at it? Will it offend anyone? In essence, then, during the period of Zambia's UNIP reign, the self-censorship took two forms – authorial self-censorship and editorial self-censorship.

For many writers, including Zambian writers, authorial self-censorship is a familiar phenomenon. Asked about why, during the Kaunda reign, no Zambian writer ever dared to explore the philosophy of Humanism, Masautso Phiri responded (Sumaili 1991: 109-10):

I don't know. I wouldn't want to tackle Humanism....You must be inspired by an issue to do it. Actually, maybe if I was paid just to be writing some propaganda materials on Humanism, I'd do it. But at the moment the theory and the practice are too far apart that I wouldn't...unless I wanted to write something to show that they are too far apart. But now you have to think of how safe it is. When I wasn't married, when I didn't think of my children – they are very young children. There will be time to write those things, to assess those things... So as a writer you understand a lot of things but at the same time you hold back.

The words of Lyson Tembo, another of the Zambian writers interviewed by Sumaili in *Zambian Writers Talking*, gives us another perspective on authorial self-censorship (Sumaili, 28-9):

It doesn't mean that a writer should have the unbridled right of saying and writing whatever he wants. Because to me, any good writer is a serious, responsible citizen and will have thought deeply about the statements he puts

down and in a sense, he will have measured the consequences and implications of what he has said. If he is a serious person, then the other people are likely to treat him seriously. But if you are frivolous, if you are a failure and you want to succeed by raising other people's emotions – people who are failures like yourself – then things go in a mess....So, responsibility on the part of writers is needed plus sobriety, decency, and also seriousness on the part of those people who are being criticised.

Having worked in the publishing industry both as editor and administrator, and also having dealt with editors as a writer, it can be argued that there is a thin line between editing and (self) censorship. In 1991, I joined the Zambia Educational Publishing House (ZEPH), whose names had just been changed from Kenneth Kaunda Foundation by the new MMD government, which, in part, was determined to rid the country of the Kaunda legacy. I therefore made my entry into the Zambian publishing industry at the start of the Third Republic. I took up the job of Literature Editor.

A few months after joining ZEPH I took part in an editorial training workshop dubbed "Editorial Skills Workshop for Zambia Educational Publishing House Editors," held at the Garden House Hotel in Lusaka for the period 16-20 December, 1991. This was an important workshop for me as a green horn because ZEPH conducted their own in-house training for editors. A number of lectures were presented by a variety of speakers from within the company.

Of relevance to this paper is the lecture that was presented on 19<sup>th</sup> December entitled "Copyright and Censorship". Presented by my immediate supervisor at the time, Senior Editor Christine Kasonde – one of the big names of publishing in Zambia – the lecture was intended to ground editors in the intricacies of copyright and censorship both as concepts and



legal considerations. On censorship, Kasonde said:

Book censorship in Zambia raises basic fundamental issues of an ethical orientation. Books get banned for reasons of state, religion and sexuality. Politics have been the most sensitive, however. The fundamental issue of politics being the subject to scrutinize cannot be washed away. There is also a need to be reminded that there is a long list of banned books in Zambia, mostly foreign ones like *The Perfumed Garden*, *Kama Sutra*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D. H. Lawrence, and more recently *Satanic Verses* by S. Rushdie.

It is worth noting that Kasonde (1991) acknowledged that most of the banned books in Zambia were foreign ones, not locally written ones. She also confirmed the absence of a law or special institution specifically aimed at censoring books in Zambia:

There is no uniform code or law for censorship of books in Zambia. However, if a book were banned a mere notification in the Government Gazette would be considered sufficient as there is no board established by the government to consider cases of censorship.

It is also worth noting that the political authorities could ban books without reference to any censorship law. They used their political powers to ban books by merely placing a notification in the Government Gazette.

In the absence of a law or body to enforce literary censorship, or the censorship of books in general, how was the book editor at ZEPH expected to work? How would the editor deal with a work that might be deemed inimical to the state or might be deemed to contain libelous material? Kasonde advised that the editor should bear in mind the following: "self-censorship and conscience of thought;

political censorship...traditional and cultural responsibility; religious responsibility; social responsibility – check for obscenity.”

Evidently self-censorship was expected to be part of the editorial process – and indeed it is. It is a process that, however, depends on the editor’s “conscience of thought” as well as sensitivity to the political situation, traditions and cultural norms, religious beliefs and social realities. An overarching concern is related to legal matters, which is why the training included tips on copyright and libel. If the company is sued because the editor did not do a thorough job, it can cost the company dearly, a point Kasonde also made:

All in all, copyright and censorship deal with the law and the writer which is a very important subject for any publisher. As an editor, this should be the starting point in the race. A banned book or a law suit can cost a publisher a lot of money. There are companies that in history collapsed after a lawsuit and all their assets were auctioned.

The fear of litigation is a reality for every publisher, and ZEPH was not an exception. The self-censorship is not just in the editorial process, but also in the terms of the agreement entered into by the writer and the publisher. Thus, for example, during the editorial training mentioned above, the author of this article was introduced to the contents of the Publishing Agreement ZEPH entered into with its authors. One clause read:

The Publisher reserves the right to *alter the text of the work* as may appear to him *appropriate* for the purpose of *removing* any passage which in his *absolute discretion* or on the advice of his legal advisers may be considered

*objectionable or likely to be actionable at law* and to do any other general editing in accordance with the Publisher's house style (emphasis mine).

Another article illustrates why writers engage in self-censorship: the fear of litigation. In other words, the laws on libel and copyright are enough to drive a writer into self-censorship:

The Author hereby *warrants to the Publisher* that the said work is an original work, has not been published and that he is the owner of the copyright therein and that he has not granted any interest in copyright by licence or otherwise to any person, company or firm to print and publish the same within the area above stated, that *it contains nothing libellous or defamatory*, that all statements contained therein purporting to be facts are to the best of the Author's knowledge and belief true, that the author has full power to make this Agreement and *will indemnify the Publisher against any loss, injury or damage* (including any legal cost or expenses and any compensation costs and disbursement paid by the Publisher to compromise or settle any claim) occasioned to the Publisher in consequence of any breach of this warrant *or arising out of any claim alleging that the work constitutes an infringement of copyright or contains libellous or defamatory matter.*"(emphasis mine)

Another factor that has had a hand in self-censorship in Zambia, particularly in the Third Republic, is the Declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation by Chiluba. With the declaration, which as already pointed out was made part of the Preamble of the Zambian constitution in 1996, the

Church became a powerful force in Zambian politics and social development. The Pentecostal movement in particular, which was the main influence behind Chiluba's declaration – himself having been a known Pentecostal – became very influential in Zambian public life. Be that as it may, the Church in general is very influential in Zambian society. It is not unusual to hear people in Zambia say, when objecting to some action or event, that such a thing cannot be allowed in Zambia because “Zambia is a Christian nation”.

Primorac (2014: 577) acknowledges the strong influence of the Church in Zambia, even on textual content of literary works.

The scarcity and high cultural value placed on books and literacy, together with the economic, political and cultural determinants of Zambia's decolonisation and its postcolonial history, have meant that, in this part of South-Eastern Africa, the presence of nationalist pedagogy in works marketed as “literary” immediately after independence frequently shades into other kinds of didacticism, including religious and spiritual moralism. This kind of pragmatically inflected textual system continues today, when Pentecostal Christianity exerts a strong influence on all kinds of local textuality.

This goes back to Kasonde's advice to editors to watch out for issues that are sensitive from a religious or moral perspective. In other words, in Zambia publishers and writers have to ponder, among other factors, the religious and moral factors before publishing a book. They have to ask themselves what would be acceptable in a “Christian Nation”.

In the Third Republic, as in the other two republics, writers and publishers have been moving with the socio-political trends. They have reacted and adjusted to the changes in Zambia's political arena. Thus, for example, during the First and Second Republics, Zambia's political views and policies

were shaped partly by the politics of the region, specifically the liberation struggles in neighbouring countries, as well as the dynamics of internal politics as dictated by ideology of the ruling party, UNIP. As Masiye correctly observes, therefore, the lack of writings questioning the philosophy of Humanism as propagated by Kaunda was “a reflection of the general environment of the country” (Sumaili 1991: 64). In other words, the “general environment” of Zambian society is reflected in the types of writings produced by particular times in the country’s history in terms of choice of language, setting, story, characters and theme.

Primorac correctly observes (2014: 578):

As the notion of “front-line” – an agonistically constructed boundary – suggests, at any given moment during the decades between 1964 and 1994, the network of colonially established state borders in Southern Africa signaled the regional presence of different literary-hermeneutic frameworks. What could and could not be said and published on either side of the mobile line separating the colonised from the sovereign part of the region was, of course, radically different. For Zambia, its frontline positioning, especially during the first 15 years of its history (before Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980) meant that an imperative of continued political and cultural resistance existed even after it had achieved national sovereignty. A substantial part of its national cultural resources was, from the very onset of independence, directed at fighting cross-border colonial domination and white supremacy. This is to say that Zambia’s post-independence expressions of cultural nationalism were always already tempered with textual concerns regarding the colonial

oppression that was continuing *elsewhere in the region*.

In keeping with the national narrative of opposition to the oppressive apartheid regime, for instance, Masautso Phiri was involved in writing the *Soweto* plays after the formation of Tikwiza Theatre in December 1975. The first *Soweto* play included some poems by Parnwell Munatamba, currently a Lecturer in the Department of Literature and Languages at the University of Zambia, and some South Africans. In 1976 *Soweto Revisited* was written and produced, evolving into *Soweto Remembered* in 1977, thus completing the *Soweto* trilogy. When *Soweto Remembered* was performed at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka, President Kaunda was in attendance, as if to demonstrate his endorsement of the play's message (Sumaili 1991: 106). The trilogy was later renamed *Soweto Flowers Will Grow*. After writing a few non-political plays, Phiri returned to the struggle theme, writing, in 1986, *The Day the Man Died*, a play centred on then South African President Botha and raising the question of what would happen if Botha died and went to heaven. Another of Phiri's plays, *Waiting for Sanctions*, urged the imposition of sanctions against the apartheid regime. *Birdshot in Windhoek* drew attention to Namibia.

The inclination to write in line with the dominant narrative of supporting the liberation struggles and opposing the racist regimes in the region was not just evident in poetry and drama, but also in the writing of fiction. A good example is the 1979 novel *Coup!* by William Simukwasa, which tackles the subject of a coup. The coup attempt takes place, not in Zambia, but in a fictive African country named Tambiya. However, the coup is unjustified and must be stopped. The villain of the story – the coup mastermind – is a South African named Chapman; a characterisation which fits the view Zambia had of South Africa as a country ruled by thoroughgoing racists bent on destabilising and remotely controlling African-ruled nations. Chapman is therefore

an embodiment and epitome of the evil South African government. His character is contrasted against that of the protagonist – a Zambian secret agent called Pungwa who is sent by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to stop Chapman’s diabolical scheme. Pungwa, needless to say, successfully accomplishes his mission, and does so in grand style. The villain is defeated. The setting of Simukwasa’s novel, as well as the tone, thematic threads and character profiles, fit the frame of the Zambian view of apartheid South Africa as villain and the frontline states as the heroes, epitomised by Pungwa.

The tendency by Zambian writers to follow the national narrative of the struggle against oppressive regimes in the region and solidarity with the oppressed African people was wide spread because, as Andrey Masiye notes, the writers “seem to have been taken by the politics of the time” (Sumaili 1991: 69). He further said of the writing of the days of Zambia as a frontline state: “To me it would appear that almost everyone who wants to write wishes to write about freedom fighting, Soweto, Angola and so on. It’s not a bad idea but you can overdo it” (69).

## **Kaunda and Censorship**

As has already been indicated, Zambia has never had a law or body designed to enforce book censorship. However, the fact that some books were still banned raises questions about how that used to happen. Was Kaunda himself behind the banning of books?

The evidence is astounding: no Zambian writer has ever claimed that Kaunda, during his autocratic reign, ever banned their book or, for that matter, play. Take the case of Masautso Phiri who, after writing about regional politics across borders, turned his attention, for once, to internal politics with a short play of about 30 minutes entitled *This Day Tomorrow*. According to Phiri, he wrote the play in 1978 and it was performed before the UNIP National

Council meeting in the Mulungushi Hall. The play involved music and excerpts from some political speeches promising good things to the people and “take off by 1978”. The play ended with the question, “During 1978 have we taken off?” (Sumaili 1991: 109).

According to Phiri, as the performance unfolded, some political leaders were passing on notes to President Kaunda, urging him to stop the performance because it was insulting him. However, Kaunda did not stop the play and at the end of the performance he said, “These young men and women in the past have talked about South Africa, they have talked about this or that country, today they have come back home.” Phiri concludes thus: “In as long as we have this particular Head of State, the present President is here, we have possibly nothing to fear” (Sumaili, 110). Needless to say, however, this was the only play Phiri wrote that appeared critical to the government’s programmes.

Mwaanga’s observation appears to corroborate Phiri’s view on censorship and Kaunda’s government (Sumaili, 50-1)

In this country, you know, I am very glad to say that at no time have I been subjected to any political pressure. I’ve had adverse political comments about my books or aspects of my books but apart from that, I’ve really not had any direct political pressures or threats or intimidation at all. So, in a big way, this is a credit to the Zambian political system that it enabled me to produce my two books which in some circles are considered fairly controversial. They are considered very direct because they touch on what people consider very sensitive subjects. The fact that the books have been produced and have seen the light of day, they have been sold on bookshelves around the country, they are used as textbooks



at the University of Zambia, which is the highest institution of learning, is a credit, it is a great credit to the Zambian political system.... Over here, we've been fortunate in that perhaps the political tolerance level is a lot higher than it is in many other African countries. I think Zambian writers have no excuse not to write.

Sumaili says that under Kaunda's rule no Zambian writer was forced to leave the country "because of his or her writings" (50). Kabwe Kasoma, whose play *Black Mamba* was banned during Kaunda's reign, still insisted, in the interview with Sumaili, that Kaunda had nothing to do with it (Sumaili, 93):

Even with the banning of my *Black Mamba* I would not really say that the banning of the *Black Mamba* was engineered by the Government as such. I would say that the banning of the *Black Mamba* plays as engineered by individuals within the Government who did not necessarily represent the Government policy. I do not think that there is any Zambian Government policy against creative writing. I think that of the many governments on the African continent, the Zambian Government has been very progressive. We have written things that in other countries could have been frowned upon.

What Kasoma implies is that there was no official government policy to censor creative works whether in the form of books or plays, but that there was nonetheless some overzealous powerful individuals within the government system who orchestrated the banning of his play. He further implies that such individuals worked without the knowledge or blessing of then President Kaunda. This further corroborates the views advanced by Phiri and Mwaanga.

## Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to show that there are several ways of classifying censorship and self-censorship. There is visible censorship as well as invisible censorship. Public censorship, which is usually legislated or enforced by a legal body, is visible. However, self-censorship tends to be invisible – and it has been the main form of book censorship in Zambia especially during the independence era. In the publishing industry, invisible censorship comes in the form of editorial and authorial self-censorship. There is however a link between self-censorship and state censorship or forms of legislation such as laws of copyright and libel. Zambia has a relatively good record on the African continent in terms of censorship of written texts. No Zambian writer has ever been thrown in jail or forced to go into exile because of their writings. Even during the authoritarian and Kaunda-centric rule of the First and Second Republics in Zambia, some books were published which, in some other African countries, might never have landed on the bookshelves. That is not to say no books were banned; a few were. However, the banning was not done by Kaunda himself but by government functionaries within the system. The self-censorship engaged in by Zambian writers and publishers has always been linked to the prevailing socio-political situation.

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