

**A STYLISTIC AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF ZAMBIAN PRISON POETRY: THE
CASE OF MWEMBESHI MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON**

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**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
Of the Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Arts in Literature**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work in this research report
is my work and that it has not previously been
submitted for any other degree at this or other universities.

SIGNED:



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Certificate of Approval

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Abstract

Several studies have established inmates chronicle their lived experiences in the works of art they produce such as poetry. Studying artworks produced by inmates therefore provides critical information that can help inform policies, programmes, and activities for rehabilitation. The Zambia Correctional Service provided arts platform for inmates to write and perform poetry. However, there were neither known studies that took interest to study this poetry nor a deliberate policy by the service to use this poetry to appreciate the lived experiences of inmates especially that the service was transforming from custodial prison system to a correctional service. Using a mixed methods inquiry anchored on the stylistic, social constructionism and structuralism study analysed selected poems written by inmates from the Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility. The analyses of these poems focused on their stylistic and thematic content and how these had a bearing on the Zambia Correctional Service. The study established that inmate poets used a wide range of stylistic content to bring out themes in a creative and appealing manner that gives a reader a vicarious experience of their lived experiences in the Zambia correctional facilities. The themes in the poems reflected the lived experiences of inmates in terms of the circumstances that led them to prison, the crimes they committed, what prison life had been like, their coping strategies and perception about the correctional activities as well as their fears and hopes for a post-prison future. Like studies that have been conducted elsewhere, this demonstrates that poetry in Zambia can be one of the most beneficial treatments in rehabilitation as it aids the understanding of the lived experiences of inmates. It can equip inmates, correctional officers, social workers, health care providers, educators and parents or guardians with tools of how they can create strategies of

helping inmates rehabilitate and how inmates can be integrated into society after release without a preconceived approach to the individual self that committed the crime.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to both my parents Tobias Mwanza and my goddess Ndlovukazi Nyundiwe Banda who were eager to see me reach this far and have always been the pillar of my hard work.

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Chapter One

General Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The Republic of Zambia is a signatory to several international protocols governing correctional services like the Mandela Rules (formerly known as Minimum Standard Rules for Prison Management) and organisations such as the African Correctional Service Association (ACSA). Such protocols and organisations mandate all signatories to establish and operationalise correctional and prison management systems that respect human rights (The Zambia Daily Mail, 23rd August 2017; p. 5). This mandate is informed by research findings that have shown that compared to the punitive model, the correctional system is more effective in the reformation process of inmates and therefore in combating crime.

It is against this background that Zambia passed the 2016 Amendment of the Prisons Act (Chapter 97 of the 1996 Laws of Zambia, Volume 7) to transform its prison punitive system into a correctional service. Offenders in Zambia are now required not to be punished for the offense they commit but to undergo rehabilitation so that they can ably contribute to national development and be re-integrated into society upon release. Thus, Zambia is in the process of developing rehabilitation programme activities and correctional services for the inmates. For such programmes to be effective, Maracle (1996) and Smith (201) argue that concerned agencies should look and consider the profile and the voices of inmates detained by the criminal justice system and the community conditions that they face. The voices of inmates help to contextualise the training and provision of programmes for the prison personnel in correctional services and the review of standard rules for prison management.

One of the established avenues for capturing the profiles and voices of inmates is through expressive and literary arts such as poetry. This is because inmates use poetry to document the circumstances that led them to prison, what prison has been like, and their fears and hopes for the future (Smith, 2011). Poetry is a powerful tool for introspection and its expression can be both healing and empowering as it opens the mind to the possibility of improvement and liberation, as with conscientisation. This benefit is not only to the poet, but through sharing, to the listeners who may be influenced to write their own poems and tell their own stories, resulting in a snowball effect. This makes poetry in the context of prison system, an equalising platform that offers inmates reclamation as a key population that is usually silenced by dominant groups and power structures (Maracle, 1996).

The recreational services for inmates in Zambia have always included poetry on its arts platforms based on the core tenets of custodial prison management. That this is the case, it remains to be established the extent to which the extrinsic and intrinsic elements of such poems document the prison experiences in Zambia. According to Toner and Elizabeth Whittome (2003), the intrinsic elements of poetry include the theme, taste, tone, mandate, diction, imagination, the central narrative, rhythm, rhyme, and figurative language while extrinsic elements are those aspects of the poem which show the psychology of the author, history of the author and of production-consumption, and sociology of work.

Accordingly, this study sought to increase the understanding of the prison experiences in Zambia through the stylistic and thematic content analysis of poems written by inmates. The study investigated what can be learnt from the prison experiences reflected in poetic productions of inmates that could assist in understanding the needs and fears of prisoners in Zambia. In addition to examining the stylistic and thematic makeup of the inmates' poetry, the study both interpreted

what the prisoners had to say about their lived experiences and assessed the various meanings their narration had regarding their conditions that could be of value to the ongoing prison policy change in Zambia.

The study used a theoretical framework anchored on stylistic and thematic analyses and triangulated these with social constructionism theory. The study took advantage of poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility compiled in a prison literary canon by the Poetry Knights under the auspices of the Zambia National Commission for UNESCO and the National Arts Council of Zambia. The Poetry Knights is a National Arts Council of Zambia registered association that through its *Voice Inside* Project connects artists behind bars with artists in the wider community and the general public. The *Voice Inside* initiative aims at contributing to the efforts by the Zambia Correctional Services of creating and sustaining a healthier and more vibrant environment for preparing inmates for success upon release and enhancing rehabilitative goals of the nation's correctional facilities.

Following this introduction is the statement of the problem that explains the problem investigated by this study including the purpose and its objectives. This is followed by the research questions as well as the significance and scope of the study. Then, the theoretical framework that guides the study is given before the methodology and methods are presented. The methodology section also includes the analytic model that the study used to explore the data and the ethical matters involved. Then, definitions of key terms in the study are given. This is followed by the literature review as well as presentation and discussion of findings chapters. The presentation of the final findings, summary and conclusion closes the study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While the Zambia Correctional Service provided an arts platform for inmates to write and perform poetry, this remained purely for recreational purposes as part of the core tenets of custodial prison management. Given that the Prison Service was being transformed to a fully-fledged Correctional Service that focuses on rehabilitation, rather than punitive punishment, this scenario was making the service lose out on a potential tool that could help to inform strategies for the rehabilitation process. Even more, there were no known studies that had been undertaken to analyse the arts in general and poetry in particular by inmates in Zambia with the purpose of establishing whether or not what studies have established elsewhere that through stylistic and thematic analysis of inmates' poetry, one can understand the circumstances that led them to prison, what prison has been like, and their fears and hopes for the future – a critical voice needed in the establishment of sound policies, programmes and activities for rehabilitation. Stated as a question the study sought to analyse: what were the stylistic and thematic characteristics of selected poetry written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility in relation to their prison experience?

1.2 Aim of the Study

The purpose of this inquiry was to analyse the stylistic and thematic characteristics of selected poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility and their relationship to the prison experience in Zambia.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To investigate the stylistic content of selected poems by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility.

2. To explore the emergent themes in the selected poems; and
3. To examine the significance of the themes and stylistic content of the selected poems in relation to the prison experience under the Zambia Correctional Service.

1.4 Research Questions

This study's focus was on the presence of stylistic and thematic influence in poems written by inmates. Doing research does not always warrant a solution to the problem researched but tries to contribute to the research topic by providing the researcher's side of the story. Therefore, this study aimed to provide answers to the following questions regarding poems selected from Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility:

1. How did the emergent themes in poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service reflect the inmate's prison experience?
2. How did the stylistic content in poetry written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service reflect the inmate's prison experience?
3. How significant were the themes and stylistic content of the selected poems in relation to the prison experience in the Zambia Correctional Service?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study contributed to the dissemination of knowledge regarding poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service. The knowledge disseminated has potential to influence future rehabilitation programmes on how to help inmates shift their personal identity, not as rejected members of society, but as rehabilitated individuals who have undergone the process of correction. This is because analysing the stylistic and thematic content in poems written by inmates has shown in this study that it helps in understanding the inmate's prison experience and the psychological

state of inmates; a condition that is pervasive in the Zambian context where voices of inmates are marginalised. Thus, poetry in Zambia like in other parts of the world can be one of the most beneficial treatments in rehabilitation as it aids the understanding of the prison experience of inmates. It also equips inmates, correctional officers, social workers, health care providers, educators and parents or guardians with tools of how they can create strategies of helping inmates rehabilitate and how inmates can be integrated into society after release without a preconceived approach to the individual self that committed the crime.

The study further refined the understanding of poetry in correctional facilities in Zambia. It provided insight into correctional facilities through inmate poems in creative expression as a process of understanding the inmates' prison experience, which can be a major factor in the success of rehabilitation. The study added to the existing body of knowledge, regarding the generators of misconduct, delinquency and aggression into criminal justice policies that govern Correctional Facilities and has far-reaching potential to influence large-scale, system-wide policy changes such as parole and release or pardon decisions.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was a literary analysis of poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service with particular interest in poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility. The choice of Mwembeshi was informed by the fact that the known documented poems written by prisoners in Zambia were from this correctional facility. The poems were documented by the United Nations Educational, Scientifics and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Zambian Commission in conjunction with the National Arts Council of Zambia (NACZ).

1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was informed by the stylistic theory and thematic analysis juxtaposed with the social constructionism theory.

1.7.1 Stylistic Approach

Stylistic approach, according to Shibu (2006) investigates how the resources of a language code can be used in the production of the actual messages. This approach considers poetry primarily as a discourse, a communicative discourse. It also deals with how the use of language patterns in a poem which create a form of communication that conveys particular messages.

In the case of this study, stylistics provided a way of integrating two subjects, language and poetry -in-language. Stylistics is a systemic teaching of poetry, and it helps in deepening the process of understanding. Niazir (2010) describes stylistic as a study of language in literature and that it is a part of linguistics. By analysing the linguistic pattern of a poem, it gives answers to questions such as how literary effects are encoded in the language of the poem written by inmates. The goal of this approach was to decode meaning and structural features of literariness by identifying linguistic pattern in the poems. Stylistics is the only linguistic discipline which allows the analysis of a literary poem and their literary meaning by way of linguistic techniques.

In this approach, poetry emphasis the inmate's choice of words and their functions, the structure and the deviation from the norms, the use of foregrounding and parallelism, and other figures of speech, the lexical cohesion and coherence in the poems and the grammatical patterns, and how all these bring out the message or meaning in the poems.

Niazir (2010) notes that style includes a writer's way of thinking about his subject and his characteristic way of presenting it for a particular reader and purpose by his way of linguistic

choices. That means, style is not mere ornament; it conveys vital details of meaning and evolution, which define the nature of an inmate, his basic attitudes, his presuppositions, his moral stance, and his relation to his subject and his reader.

Therefore, the theory of stylistics was used in this study to translate how the emergent themes, symbols and the imagery in poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi reflect the inmate's prison experience and rehabilitation.

1.7.2 Thematic Approach

Thematic analysis has been described as “a foundational method for qualitative analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). It was developed as a method of qualitative research that provides a means of interpreting data (text) in a rigorous and conscientious manner (Fertuck, 2007) to allow searching for emerging themes as opposed to distilling them and involves “careful reading and re-reading of the data” (Rice & Ezzy, as cited in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 81).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a five-step process:

1. STEP ONE involves familiarising oneself with the data in this case the poems written by inmates, to include reading and re-reading the data and noting down of initial ideas.
2. STEP TWO is a process of coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire dataset, and collating data relevant to each code.
3. STEP THREE is the searching for themes. This includes collating the codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. STEP FOUR is the process of reviewing the themes, checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset and generating a ‘thematic map’ of the analysis.

5. STEP FIVE is the defining and naming themes, including generating clear definitions and names for each theme. Thematic analysis has been selected in preference to a literature review since the idea of understanding poetry occurs at the thematic point of any given poem. Thematic analysis is very different to a literature review, providing a unique method of engaging with a poem so that overall themes and concepts can start to emerge.

Willig (1999) points out that, thematic analysis can be a constructionist method which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society. It can also be a 'contextualised' method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, and characterised by theories such as social constructionism.

Thematic analysis was used as a means of interpreting the poems written by inmates. This analysis gave the study the opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely within the poems written by inmates. By using this analysis there was the possibility to link various concepts and opinion and compare these with the poem that had been gathered. Lioness Ayres (2008) posit that thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorised, summarised, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set. Thematic analysis was in this case primarily a descriptive strategy that facilitated the search for patterns of prison experience, rehabilitation, and other themes within the poems. They also used thematic analysis identify patterns of prison experience; interpreting and classifying poems, according to themes; and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking commonalties, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles.

1.7.3 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism concerns itself with everyday interactions between people and how they use language to construct their reality. It has an epistemological and not an ontological perspective in exploring a given phenomenon. Therefore, social constructionism in this study was used to establish how inmates construct their realities through the stylistics and themes. Preston (1942:24) notes that the relationship between art and poetry with society is an old Aristotelian idea dubbed as mimesis. The argument being that art imitates reality, produces society and vice versa. Accordingly, social constructionism was used to establish how the themes, symbols and poetic devices used in the poems in question reflects the lived prison experiences of inmates and structures of the Zambia Correctional Service.

Schneider, Anne, and Ingram (1993:334-347) argue that social constructionism refers to the cultural characterisations or popular images of the persons or groups whose behaviour and well-being is affected by public policy. The characterisations are normative and evaluative; portraying prison lived experience in positive or negative terms through symbolic language, thematic and imagery. Social constructionism challenges the view that knowledge is based on an objective, unbiased observation of the world. Stereotypically, inmates are portrayed as criminals and societal deviants, while the actual poems written by inmates do not reflect the theme of deviance, crime, or misconduct. Therefore, this study investigated the social construction of the prison experience through the inmate's poetic expression, through social constructionism the study also analysed the prison social construct of rehabilitation and the process of prisonisation.

Vivien (2003) argues that knowledge is a social process. What one knows is derived through the daily interactions between people during social life that one's version of knowledge becomes fabricated. The knowledge that inmates socially construct determines how they address an issue

in a poem. If self-identity is the sign of rehabilitation, then the thematic content of the poem will be constructed with a self-identity thematic thread. If suicide is a sign of freedom, then the symbolism within the poems will be constructed with symbols of suicide. If rehabilitation is part of the prison experience, then encouragement of the process of rehabilitation becomes necessary. One can begin to see how societal views of inmates depend on the social construction of prison. If prison is for deviants, then inmates are bad people. If prison is a home of criminals, then all inmates are criminals and should be rehabilitated. If prison is part of the process of rehabilitation, then inmates are people to be admired. Society definitions may change, but the prison experience may not.

1.8 Methods and Methodology

In this study, a mixed methods inquiry strategy was used. This strategy supports the exploratory and descriptive nature of research to collect data. The study triangulated data sources but used documental analysis as the sole method.

1.8.1 *Triangulation*

The triangulation of data sources involved comparing the thematic, symbolic, and poetic devices presentation in the poems under study with the archival and published information about prison writings. Further, to minimise the flaws that sometimes arise with triangulation, that is, the yielding of convergent findings which may make the findings appear unquestionable, the findings of the study were compared with related studies in literature (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz & Sechrest, 1966). This was done to increase the validity of the study and allow for comparative gaining of insight into different perspectives of the issue at hand and to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence.

1.8.2 Documental Analysis

This study was not intended to give an in-depth exposition or attempt to demonstrate the research applicability of documental analysis to those who are not familiar with this method or are just sceptical. This is because such a task was already ably dealt with elsewhere. Here, only a brief description is given. Then, a focus is made on explaining how this study employed these methods in gathering and processing data with respect to the objectives of the study.

To give meaning to the study, documental analysis as a qualitative process was used. This involved the selection, categorisation, investigation, and interpretation of documents, including acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses, which contain information of the phenomenon being studied. Scott (1990) argues that in handling documentary sources, quality control is vital, particularly to ensure authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Authenticity involves ascertaining the legitimacy and excellence of the source of the document. Credibility refers to whether the document is archetypal of its kind. Foddy (1993) argues that representativeness requires establishing how the consulted documents are representative of the totality of the relevant documents. And meaning is about the clarity and comprehensiveness of the sources and the documents (Scott, 1990). To achieve this, two core categories of documentary sources were considered: Firstly, published documents in the form of books, and periodicals such as newspapers and magazines. This was complemented with some general surfing on the internet. Such surfing, however, was only for insights and to randomly check if there is anything relevant in the public domain that is emerging in relation to this study.

To arrive at the number and which poems to study, poems were collected based on the thematic content, symbolism, and poetic devices in which they are written, and the discerned message contained there in relation to the stylistic analysis, social constructionism and structuralism. The

poems were selected based on the classification of theme, poetic devices, and style. The theme of the poem must have a motif of rehabilitation and prison lived experience. The symbolism is required to include prison lived experience. While there might be several poems that met the criteria, only fifteen were selected based on the last category of the poetic devices employed in the poems.

For journals and books, specifically peer reviewed were considered. This included journal articles, books and newspapers focused on prison writing. Such data sources as Google Books and Google Scholar and Zambian local newspapers like the Daily Mail and Lusaka Times were consulted. The general World Wide Web was surfed for videos, blogs, sites, and creative literary events. Key words were used in the search; words such as: “stylistics, social constructionism and structuralism,” “poetry in prison writings,” “Prison and social constructionism,” and “poetry and structuralism.” The searched documents were presented in the form of full text and sorted out using document analysis of the key words. Repeated titles, authors, journals, and uncompleted articles were screened out. And documents not written in English as well as those which repeatedly appear in different years or different journals, for example, were deleted. Further, the body of documents were examined to determine which one might be relevant to the study.

After establishing relevant documents, each one was scrutinised. On the overall, the scrutiny involved identifying parts and aspects of the documents that could be used to answer specific research questions. The documents were scrutinized to establish what so far, if any, had been written about the process of rehabilitation through literature written by inmates.

Further, the literature on poetry, rehabilitation and prison experience was reviewed as a process of focusing on the context in question. This literature was reviewed and revised with the question of

how themes, symbols and poetic devices reflect the process of rehabilitation and prison lived experiences in poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service: A case study Mwembeshi Maximum Prison Facility.

1.8.3 Data Collection

Data was collected in two main phases. The pre-dissertation phase and dissertation phase. The former phase was done before this study was proposed for approval by the University of Zambia department of literature and languages and the directorate of research and graduate studies. This phase was done based on the researcher's own interest and marked the process of formulating and designing the study. The pre-dissertation stage should be considered as the foundation of this study. It ended after the research proposal for this study was approved. Then the dissertation phase began.

The poems were collected from the Zambia Correctional Service Resource Centre the Zambia National Arts Council, and the Zambia UNESCO Resource Centre of which all the mentioned resource centres have documented poetry written by inmates from Mwembeshi Maximum Prison. Desktop research was used in reading and analysing the poems under study as well as surfing the internet for relevant information as explained in the preceding sections. Then archival places were visited to collect data from documents that chronicle poetry event festivals in the Zambia Correctional Service.

The data was collated in designated, and password protected folders on a laptop computer database and backed up in an external hard drive. This storage process was done for security reasons: the mobile phone and laptop computer that was used was only accessed by persons other than the researcher.

1.8.4 Integration of Data and Overall Analysis

The constant comparative strategy was used to integrate and explore the data as informed by the theoretical lens built from the stylistic analysis, social constructionism, and the structuralism. Algozzine, Spooner and Karvonen all show that the constant comparative strategy is a method of research analysis for multi-data sources which begins early in the study and nearly completed by the end of data collection and leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories (Algozzine, Spooner & Karvonen, 2002). The method involves breaking down the data into themes or discrete “units” and coding them into categories. The theoretical framework used in this study provides an analysis of inmate’s prison experiences to a deeper understanding of how inmates make meaning out of the prison experience through writing and as a springboard for considering rehabilitation and prison policy change.

Accordingly, poems written by inmates and collected data on stylistics, social constructionism and structuralism and rehabilitation were placed in this analysis model and the following key questions were posed: How do themes in poetry written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service reflect the prison experience? How do symbols in poetry written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service reflect the prison experience? How do poetic devices in poetry written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service reflect the prison lived experience? And to what extent have the selected poems under study reflect an inmate’s experience in prison and the process of rehabilitation. In the conclusion of each analysis, each picture that emerges will be looked at how it explains the hidden themes, poetic devices and symbols of poetry works written by inmates.

1.9 Conceptual Definitions

1.9.1 Stylistics

An aspect of literary study that emphasises the analysis of various elements of style (such as metaphor and diction).

1.9.2 Social Constructionism

An approach that assumes that realities are shaped through experiences and interactions with others.

1.9.3 Correctional Facility

A prison, jail, penitentiary, detention centre or remand centre is an institution in which inmates are forcibly confined and denied a freedom under the authority of the state.

1.9.4 Structuralism

This is literary criticism reveals underlying structures and their components in each work of art.

1.9.5 Rehabilitation

A planned correctional intervention that targets for change internal and or social criminogenic factors with the goal of reducing recidivism and where possible, of improving other aspects of an offender's life.

1.9.6 Poetry

It is content in the form of words, which often express the mind and psychic tribulation, thus influencing the emotions. The form safely imagines the content (image, sound) and a specified organisation of words.

1.9.7 *Prisonisation*

It is the process of accepting the culture and social life of prison society. It can be described as a process whereby newly institutionalised offenders come to accept prison lifestyles and criminal values. Prisonisation forms an informal inmate code.

1.9.8 *Subculture*

It is a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture.

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter a background of the study about the nature of the Zambia Correctional Service and poems written by inmates was presented. Other aspects included are the statement of the problem, the purpose, the objectives and the significance. To ease comprehension and avoid ambiguity as well as vagueness of any kind, the following have been done: Conceptual definitions have been contextualised within the scope of the study. The next chapter gives the literature that was reviewed in relation with this study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Researchers are investigating various aspects of poetry, but few studies have considered poetry for incarcerated writers. There is limited research that documents the stylistic and thematic expressions of incarcerated poets. Furthermore, no known study was found that investigated the prison lived experience, rehabilitation through poetry, and how prison affects the writer's style and themes in Zambia. Within this literature review, implications of poetry, challenges of those who are incarcerated, effects of poetry for people in prison, poetry while incarcerated are discussed. The goal in discussing this literature is to give a sense of perspective and awareness of the stylistic and thematic aspects of poetry, as well as daily challenges of prison life for inmates. Such background information provides understanding to this research study.

This section reviews the literature that related to the topic of stylistic and thematic analysis and its consequences on the understanding of poems written by inmates. The aim was to review some of the research studies, relating to stylistic and thematic analysis, that have been done, and how this study can contribute new knowledge by forging a linkage and relationship with existing material. The studies and research already carried out on the topic of poetry, stylistics and thematic analysis provide useful information that can be used for future reference. This study, which puts the poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Prison into the context through an analysis within the framework of stylistic and thematic analysis, is hoped to go beyond the existing information by going back to the process of rehabilitation, at the same time, show how the poems provide an insight into the process of prisonisation and prison lived experience. However, this research was

limited in scope, and adopted narrow literary analysis of poems written by inmates only from Mwembeshi Maximum Prison. It is necessary to note that this study was conceived and structured on the critical viewpoints of literary theories, especially since it discusses the connection between poetry, prison experience, rehabilitation, and literature.

2.1 The Implications of Poetry Writing

Arts-based programmes link poetry writing with a wide variety of academic, social, and emotional functions among populations, including children (Gfeller, 1987; Morin, 2008; Roberts, 2006; Smith, 2000; Satterwhite, 1991; Stephenson, 2004; Tobias, 2010), those who are terminally ill (Anderson, 2012), victims of trauma (Hatcher, 2004) those suffering from mental disorders (Groke, Bloke & Castle, 2008; Vander Kooij, 2009), homeless adolescents (Jurgensmeier, 2012), underserved urban youth (Viega, 2013), and adults of all ages (Alvarado, 2012; Bakan, 1999; Barba, 2005; Ippoliti, 2009; Krout, Baker, & Muhlberger, 2010; Sena-Martinez, 2012). These studies suggest that poetry writing opportunities which are flexible enough to meet inmates' varying physical, emotional, and cognitive needs can enrich the writers' lives and give greater depth of understanding to the creative process, social interactions, and human relationships. In addition to these influences upon the understanding of creative processes and social interactions, researchers have investigated links between poetry writing and expression.

2.2 Themes and Style add Dimension to Poetic Expression

When a writer renders a situation or a feeling into a thematic form, the poem says something unique, something that could not have been said in any other way (Satterwhite, 1999). The original feeling or the emotion is intensified by the act of consolidating the thought into thematic form. Cahnmann (2003) suggests that writing poetry involves a balance of freedom and constraint; poets use structured themes to support their creative play. Writing poetry calls for a heightened sense of

language which style; the poet must consider the sounds of phonemes, prosody, and tone, and coordinate these with syntactical structures of word order and semantics (verbal meaning). Phrases and sentences are ordered to create images, meanings, logic, and narrative (Cahnmann, 2003; Leavy, 2009). Cahnmann (2003) also suggests that regular and irregular rhythms, such as patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables, may have special meaning in each situation, end stops, punctuation, white space, and short lines focus visual and auditory attention, heightening the word impact. When discussing poetry and its possible emotional effects upon both the poet and an audience, “poetry is a risky business” (p. 30). She also goes on to say, “Through poetic craft and practice, we can surprise ourselves and our audiences with new possibilities” (p. 34).

Leavy (2009), expresses sentiments like Cahnmann’s regarding expressive elements of poetry. She mentions that poems are highly attentive to space, which includes breaths and pauses, and words are used sparsely to create a feeling (p. 64). In other words, poems use language, rhythm, and space to create sensory scenes where themes emerge from the careful construction of both language and silences. “In this way,” Leavy writes, “a poem can be understood as evoking a snippet of human experience that is artistically expressed in a heightened state” (p. 64). Leavy also mentions that poetry evokes multiple layers of meaning. Poetry defies singular definitions because what is absent in the text is just as important as what is present; poetry mirrors the complexity of prison identity, and the difficulties of recognizing who an inmate is and who they want to be. According to Leavy, it evokes emotional responses; sometimes uniting humankind, other times, causing disparity as it captures the human condition and social realities, while reaching broad audiences.

Besides the structured style and themes that poetry brings to the understanding of the prison lived experience Merriam(1964)explains that poems often have cultural thematic meaning, and that often clearly reflect the culture of which they are a part: “Through the study of poetry,” Merriam

writes, “it may well be possible to strike quickly through the protective mechanisms to arrive at an understanding of ethos of the culture, and to gain some perspective of the psychological problems and processes peculiar to it” (p. 201). Poetry can be used and/or created for a variety of cultural reasons, including relieving psychological tension, or for correcting erring members in a society (Merriam, p. 207).

Poetry written by inmates can be post-facto in both style and theme that is, arising out of situations that already exist. These types of poems may be historical or neutral, commenting upon everyday situations or dramatic works, a commentary on a prison scandal, such as a robbery or an escape. Poems can also express unsatisfactory social conditions, paint a vision of the future, or crystallise new demands of an undermined population (Ippoliti, 2009; 26 Merriam, 1964). Through a poem, individuals or groups express deep-seated themes that are often not permissibly verbalised in other contexts (Merriam, 1964, p. 191). Frequently, the theme of a particular poem may seem quite innocuous at a literal level, while at a figurative, latent level, understood by the audience, it may be revolutionary (p. 195). Because a higher portion of the prison population is afflicted with cognitive, situational, social, and mental challenges, the study discusses how poetry writing can be an expressive outlet for inmates.

According to Thompson (2009), the style of a poem has metaphors which have been used therapeutically to encourage people to look more deeply at the relationship between the reality of their actual life experiences and the manners in which they describe their lives. Thompson (2009) explored metaphorical themes in poetry therapy settings. She also examined two case examples in which poetry therapy clients used metaphors in writing two short, original poems in two separate open poetry therapy group sessions offered in a psychiatric hospital. Through the discussions and the writing process, clients discovered that they had common experiences and backgrounds, and

as they reflected upon the metaphors they had used in their poems, they examined both the literal and the symbolic meanings. Thompson found that many of the clients came to realize that they did not have to “make do” with their circumstances. The metaphors helped them to objectify their problems and reframe their thinking, and thus reshape their experiences. Thompson concludes, “The use of metaphor in prisons allows inmates the freedom to re-construct their desired future narratives collectively” (p. 9).

2.3 Lives of the Incarcerated

People living in prison cope with conditions that are often not part of everyday living in free society. Overcrowding, limited personal privacy, and restricted social opportunities are only a few of the challenges that prisoners face. Because the participants of this study are incarcerated, they are subjected to different challenges.

2.3.1 The Concept of Prisonisation

Just as there are various cultures among citizens in the free world, separate subcultures of those larger cultures exist, including the culture of incarceration. Within this subculture, prison culture varies from one correctional facility to the next (Caldwell, 2007).

Unlike Leavy and Cahnmann who only focus on the style and themes without an analysis of the prison subculture, this study analyses the subculture as an influential theme in poems written by inmates. Donald Clemmer (1940) studied the general dynamics of social relationships within prisons. Clemmer introduced the concept of “prisonisation,” which he defined as the assimilation process in which inmates more or less identify with and adhere to, “in greater or less degree. . . the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary” (p. 299). Clemmer's investigation does not look at prisonisation as a theme that constructs the inmates' prison

experience, this paper on the other hand gives an analysis of poems written by inmates with an appreciation of prisonisation as the theme that constructs the inmates prison experience.

The prisonisation process affects every inmate to some extent (Clemmer, 1940). What are the origins of this prison culture? Unfortunately, prison culture is rooted in violence and poverty, and it has several distinctive features as a social structure of diverse sub-cultures (Alexander, 2010; Caldwell, 2007; Western, Kleycamp & Rosenfeld, 2006). Members of society who are violently diverse and do not have money are often much more familiar with the culture of incarceration (Alexander, 2010; Ficken & Gardstrom, 2002; McConville & Baldwin, 1982; Western, Kleycamp & Rosenfeld, 2006).

Frequently, those who have been incarcerated also have cognitive, psychological, and social issues (Alexander, 2010; Ficken & Gardstrom, 2002; Reed, 2002; Watson, 2002). Often, incarcerated youth have been diagnosed with Conduct Disorder (CD) or Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). There are other confounding issues in the prison population, including Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which often accompanies CD and/or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) (Rio & Tenney, 2002).

2.3.2 Social Constructionism

Writing is a powerful act. This is because of the introspection involved entails better understanding of oneself and one's experience. This new knowledge can be both healing and empowering as it opens the mind to the possibility of improvement and liberation, as with conscientisation. Writing poetry, and thereby breaking the silence, only adds to this sense of rehabilitation. Through sharing, poetry has the potential to influence the social construction of prisons, perhaps to even deconstruct

the idea of incarceration. Where some groups of people have been and continue to be silenced by dominant groups and power structures, poetry offers a space and a voice; it enables reclamation.

Some see poetry engagement among certain cultural groups as a natural reclamation and/or continuance of long-existing oral traditions, as in African, Aboriginal, and other indigenous histories, as well as in European poetic history. For instance, in a study involving indigenous female poets, Bell (1999:36) observes, “It would seem that many Native women are reconstructing their individual identity through writing, thereby changing the group identity.” Maracle (1996:22) notes the power that writing affords oppressed groups in confronting systems of oppression: “Native women are going to raise the roof and decry the dirty house which patriarchy and racism have built on our backs.”

Unlike Bell and Maracle who focus on poetry done by Indigenous female poets, this study tried to establish the potential of stylistic and thematic analysis through poetry written by inmates as an agent tool that change societies understanding of prisons. As Bell (1999:39) states, “Poetry is not a static collection of words but may be a moment of revelation or revolution.” As the late spoken word artist and black civil rights activist Gil Scott-Heron once famously proclaimed, “The revolution will not be televised” (“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”). Bell (1999) posits regarding the meaning behind this often-repeated mantra, Bell (1999) states that “The first change that takes place is in your mind” (“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”). He explains that the beginnings of a revolution cannot be caught on camera because they would be internal, personal, manifesting in the form of private epiphanies and realizations. This study argues that poetry has and can spark the realisations of personal change and reconstruct the societal perspectives on prisons. Poetry is one space in which activism meets action and creates the potential for change. Inmate poems can be despairing or even brutal, but if it tells the truth, it allows the possibility of

transformation. Poetry can not only empower people who are othered, but can often move them to speak, to share their stories. Speaking is the purpose of poetry. As discussed earlier, the stories that poets from marginalised backgrounds share are often counter stories to the many dominant narratives that enable and hinder rehabilitation in Zambia Correctional service. Sharing these stories is the first step toward inspiring empathy in others, and hopefully, rehabilitation.

Poetry is a movement. Why this exciting literary genre is often ignored or even devalued in prisons are perplexing. Perplexing considering the broad applications that exist therein for rehabilitation, even for what Kevin Kumashiro (2000) referred to as education that is critical of privileging and othering and, potentially, education that changes students and society. Unlike Kumashiro who explores how young people's experiences in creating and listening to spoken word poetry shape their understandings of their realities, this research analysed poems written by inmates from stylistics, social constructionism and structuralism point of view and sought to understand what place poetry has in their lives, and what role it plays in relation to rehabilitation.

2.3.3 The Harsh Realities of Incarceration

The living conditions of incarceration, including over-crowded facilities, lack of privacy, living with others who may be violent and dangerous, a highly inflated prison economy, and lack of opportunities for healthy social relationships often make prison life difficult to endure (Alexander, 2010; Alexander, 2012; Caldwell, 2007; Paglen, 2005; Tarius, 2008). Some prisoners harbour thoughts of suicide or worry about friends who may attempt suicide to escape the hardships of incarceration (Cooper & Berwick, 2001). Certainly, the prison staffs are concerned by the attempted suicides of prisoners; additionally, prisoners may fear victimisation by other aggressive prisoners (Maitland & Sludder, 1996), and a substantial percentage of prisoners are frustrated by cognitive and intellectual disabilities (Herrington, 2009; Rio & Tenney, 2002). Along with these

difficulties, prisoners often are worried about a lack of educational qualifications (Gallagher, 2001; Herrington, 2009; Snyder, van Wormer, Chadha, & Jagers, 2009; Williams et al., 2006), or have no hope for their futures (Cashin, Potter, & Butler, 2008). Losing relationships with loved ones, such as spouses or children, is often an additional painful reality of incarceration (Gallagher, 2001; Snyder, van Wormer, Chadha, & Jagers, 2009; Tarius, 2008; Williams et. al., 2006).

2.4 Poetry Writing while Incarcerated

Most poetry writing studies involving prisoners are poetry therapy case studies, and these studies suggest that poetry writing has the potential to positively affect forensic clientele. Implications of poetry for those who are incarcerated included developing a new skill, gaining a sense of satisfaction from the poetry writing process, finding satisfaction from pursuing detailed work over a period of time, improving one's ability to plan tasks and solve problems that require multiple steps, increasing pro-social skills, gaining a greater respect for others, finding a productive use of leisure time, and relaxing in a pro-social way (Fulford, 2002; Gallagher & Steele, 2002; Harbert, 2010; Rio & Tenney, 2002; Roma, 2010; Sheehan, 2010). Publications also suggest that poetry writing is a psychologically safe way to express emotions (Cohen & Hickey, 2012; Cohen & Wilson, 2012; Elsil, 2005; Harvey, 2010; Palidofsky & Stolbach, 2012; Roma, 2010; Tiernan, 2010; Sheehan, 2010; Wolf & Wolf, 2012), and that incarcerated poetry writers often derive a sense of increased self-worth from the activity (Cohen & Hickey, 2012; Harvey, 2010; Roma, 2010; Sheehan, 2010).

Former inmate, Laresse Harvey (2010), suggests that a comprehensive reintegration process that included writing, poetry, music, and drama could help to reduce recidivism and produce productive citizens. Harvey claims that creative thinking through artistic activities could help prisoners survive the hustle and bustle of everyday life challenges beyond the prison walls, and she felt that

individuals could learn how to use the creativity they had developed while incarcerated to keep them from returning to prison. Speaking from experience, she wrote, “I am a part of what ‘The Arts’ can offer ... HOPE ... CHANGE ... SECOND CHANCES” (p. 129).

While incarcerated at the York Correctional Institution for five years, Harvey (2010) participated in various arts-education opportunities. She attributed her success after time spent in prison to her arts-based prison educational experiences. She reported that her life was transformed through those experiences.

Prison has traditionally discouraged individuality in any form. The prison population is often in flux; some individuals are released, others transported to different facilities, or are sent to solitary confinement quarters, further complicating prison social opportunities and relationships. Poetry writing may provide incarcerated participants the opportunity and means to be expressive and connect with others through sharing their thoughts and stories as they create poems. The opportunities to make interpersonal connections and build a sense of community could be of great benefit to incarcerated human beings who are often viewed as mere numbers and statistics by the correctional system.

2.5 Rehabilitation and Poetry

Many scholars note multiple positive effects from engagement with poetry. Jung for example, argues that the development and knowledge of the Self are the goals of human life and poetry plays a role in the process of individuation. When inmates have fully developed their personality functions, they are in touch with the Self archetype and are able to bring more conflicting thoughts into consciousness through poetry. Social Constructionists scholar argue that poetry can facilitate the reclamation of power and social identity among members of oppressed groups, and therefore

can be a potentially liberating experience for inmates, poetry has the potential to generate structure, a key precursor to identifying structure that within the poems that are dominant to the poem's themes, symbols and images, among inmates and this structure can affect intrapersonal, interpersonal, and perhaps even social change.

It is important to acknowledge that the study included literature from studies concerning writing and poetic writing in general and those concerning inmate writing. In part, the relative lack of existing literature on inmate poetry writing in Zambia necessitated this decision. Nonetheless, it made sense that written poetry is an initiative element of rehabilitation. Therefore, literature concerning poetic writing of any form had import in the study.

2.6 Stylistics

Stylistics and the teaching of literature have their roots in the works of Widdowson (1975), Collie and Slater (1986), Carter (1983), Carter and Long (1987), Short (1983), Lazar (1993). However, as is noted by Simpson (2004), stylistics in the early twenty-first century is very much alive and well. Upon the exploration of texts (may it be literary or non-literary) by the utilization of stylistics, Simpson (2003) says “this method of inquiry has an important reflexive capacity as far as it can shed light on the very language system it derives from; it informs of the ‘rules’ of language because it often explores texts where these rules are bent, distended, or stretched to breaking point. Interest in the thematic content is always at the core in contemporary stylistic analysis which is why this study will apply stylistics to interpret the themes in the poems written by inmates.

In the case of this study, the rehabilitative potential of poetry lay in the process of interpreting the content of the poems. Carter (1996:5) argues on the relevance of stylistics for literature teaching

stating that stylistic analysis helps to foster interpretative skills and to encourage reading between the lines. He further posits the advantages of stylistics stating that stylistics provides scholars with a method of scrutinising texts, ‘a way in’ to a text, opening starting points for fuller interpretation. Carter's method is detailed and explicit, it shows how one can reach or begin to reach an interpretation of any literary work such as poetry. From this research point of view, inmates author poems explicitly and consciously. Pedagogically sensitive stylistics can give an insight into the inmate’s prison experience and a good literary analysis.

Carter`s (1996) emphasis on how stylistics can be a useful tool in literary analysis is of paramount importance since literature analysis has caused a feeling of apprehension in the pedagogy of literary criticism. Prison poetry is no exception in this sense. To this study, stylistics was applied in the interpretation of poetry written by inmates. The aforementioned “apprehensiveness” is even more ascendant when it comes to analysis of poetry. In another study, Akyel (1995) argues that although poems have a lot to offer in stylistic analysis, because of the ‘unusual’ features of poetic language, scholars either do not seem to be much interested in using stylistics in literary analysis especially poetry, or they cannot communicate their enthusiasm. None the less, this study did not refrain indulging in the literary analysis that reaffirms the centrality of language as the aesthetic medium of poetry. This is because poems written by inmates possess the conscious, systematic knowledge about the language which provides the best basis for stylistic analysis. In many respects, therefore, poetry is often better for stylistics analysis.

In research, Arıkan (2005) interprets the views of prospective stylistic analysis and posits that scholars support the inclusion of stylistic analysis in their literary analysis since through literature they have access to the authentic use of the language. In this process, there is the potential for both stylistic analysis and rehabilitation through the self-imposed and socially constructed restrictions

to fall away and a new appreciation of others and self to emerge. Unlike Arikian, the stylistic will be used in this study in understanding the symbolic, thematic potency of poetry in rehabilitation. The writing of expressive art such as poetry can have enormous therapeutic effects, such as self-identity for inmates. Even though the recovery process can be long, it is possible to help inmates move from formless anguish to symbolisation, from isolation to connection, from destruction to creation, and from silence to speech. It is the process of moving away from silence which affords poetry with its most potent aspect in rehabilitation.

In the case of this study, the rehabilitative potential of poetry lay in the process of interpreting the poems through stylistics, social constructionism, and structuralism. The introspective act of writing poetry quelled emotional pain by improving the sufferer's understanding of the pain and well interpreted under a stylistics, social constructionism, and structuralism theoretical framework. Richardson (2000) described writing as a way of knowing, of finding out about oneself.

2.10 Conclusion

The review of existing literature has shown that the motivating factors as well as the general trends of poetry such as thought, emotion, experience and culture are common to all sub-cultures. Among the few scholars who have written on the stylistic and thematic analysis poetry, none of them has done a detailed stylistic and thematic analysis of selected poem from a prison facility. The closest attempt has been made by Bell and Maracle who focus on poetry done by indigenous female poets, this study tried to establish the potential of stylistic and thematic analysis through poetry written by Indigenous female inmates in the United States of America as an agent tool that change societies understanding of prisons. Leavy and Cahnmann on the other hand only focus on the style and themes in poems and not poems written by inmates or prison as a subculture, the current study is therefore important because it is a detailed stylistic and thematic analysis of poems written by

inmates. Since this chapter has created the basis for analysing the selected poems which will be done extensively in Chapters 4 and 5. The next chapter presents the selected poems analysed in this study.

Chapter Three

Selected Poems from Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents 10 selected poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum prison. The poems are not categorized in a specific thematic pattern, type, or group. The poems are presented as collected from the Zambia Correctional Service Resource Centre, the Zambia National Arts Council, and the Zambia National Commission for UNESCO Documentation Centre.

3.1 Bang Bang

This poem was written by Inmate of Serial Number 39/19. He committed a crime of Aggravated Robbery and Murder. He was a male aged 42 years old with a 25-year prison sentence and had served 16 years by the year 2020. Inmate 39/19 was Christian by religion, divorced with two children and attained a secondary education certificate before his arrest. He was raised by a single parent. His poem, *Bang Bang* is as below:

Bang, Bang, Bang, silence in court
The only sound I heard was of papers
Flipping and in the back side of
My heart come a Bemba adage
“umusuku aubi utukisha impanga”

Indeed, I have brought shame to
A fruitful womb of my mother
Born in the family of seven

I happen to be the “black sheep”

Mum your wish was to see a brighter future.

But my delinquency groups plunged me

Into these long high walls

For aggravated robbery murder a heinous offence

Which I will never be proud of

“To regret is foolishness, to realize is wisdom”

Mum, it is true I would love to

Re-enter into your fruitful womb to make amends

To stitch those bleeding scars and wounds

To teach the foetus I that crime does not pay

“Uwenda mupanga euleta makasa yankalamu”

Your tears are heavy to stay in your eyes

Every night in my dormitory, I see you cry

I see the walls punting at me

Saying shame on you, your mum bleeds.

This is the darkest episode of my life

Correctional officers have helped me

Rediscover my potentiality in life

“Uwakwensha ubushiku bamutasha ngabwacha”

I have the hope and belief

That one day the Zambian citizens

Whose trust I betrayed will embrace me

“To error is human, to forgive is divine.”

3.2 A President in a Correctional Facility

This piece was written by Inmate Serial Number 1182/18 who was a male prisoner facing a 15-year jail sentence for the case of defilement and had served 5 years. Inmate 1182/18 was Christian by religion, marital status single, a single parent of one child; he attained secondary education at Zambezi secondary school. He authored the following poem:

24/7 am guarded

Respected highly by these wardens

Their guns trailing on me

This prison experience pains less to me

The bodyguards are always watching me

Even when I do not think of escaping

But I wonder why am always counted

Counted like money is the manner of this presidency

They slap my shoulders as they count

My shoulder skin has started itching

From the slaps of different bodyguards

They count me like am a counterfeit

In here am always a number

But better days of my victory are coming

Coming after the expiring date of my (E.P.D)

One day I will live like an ordinary citizen.

3.3 It is Useless

Inmate Serial Number 719/19 was jailed for Indecent Assault. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison and had served 5 years. He is Christian by religion and married with four children. He attained secondary education at Mungwi Secondary School. Both father and mother were still alive. He authored the following poem:

Yes, it is useless

Yes, this life is useless

Yes, year in year out we toil

Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

Generations come and go

Just like inmates also

Man keeps on committing crime

Mostly in his prime

A fertilized egg we all start life

Yet humanity surges to crime and strife

So, she got the wish of what she wanted

That she did

That she did fell in love with a wrong man

That she did

A shameful deed

Shameful indeed

Abortion, a crime of passion

That is what he did.

3.4 The Work I Never Knew

This poem was written by Inmate Serial Number 202/19, a male prisoner aged 36. He was facing eighteen years imprisonment for aggravated robbery at the time. He was Christian by religion.

Inmate 202/19 is married with two children. He attained secondary education certificate at Arakan Secondary School. His father, mother and wife were all still alive. His poem read as follows:

Crime is the passport entry

A travelling document into these walls

How do I end this?

I ask the preacher man who tells me to repent.

Friends, friends, why me alone

In this prison I see all people

Survival is the grace of God

God is acknowledged more here.

The preacher man tells me darkness

Dark moment of its own kind

I presume the prison as the darkness

An opaque colour not transparent of justice

Ahead of me, I see no future

God says "I plan your future"

A thought to give you home

What is this future again?

What home I ask him?

Let not your heart be troubled

Yet trouble and worry are part of me

Handling them like a hot pan

Tears flowing like a river

Crying is the new food for my eyes

These have become part of me

“My son do not despise my chastening

I rebuke those I love” says Lord

Is prison my rebuke? I ask the Lord.

Innovation, invention, creativity my new friend

Friends indeed who sticks closer, than my people

Crime does not pay but pains

Hard labour, misery is its fruit

When eaten, crime is like poison

A killer that kills slowly but fatal

Do you admire this world?

I urge you as the edge of the blade

Crime is sharper and thin food for thought

Endangering everyone who touches it

This world calls for no body

But I forced the blade over a silly mistake

I was not mindful

It accorded me shame

Today am trampled upon

Time comes, brings with it

A bucket of water to wash me

Soap and lotion dry as I stink

Pushes my thoughts to change me

In stillness of the night with

No sleep to my eyes

But watch over night lamenting remorsefully

A pillow to witness as a water to reveal

The secret, hidden movies of my dream

The future I hoped for

A meaningless stigmatized, laughingstock

This world welcomes and shatters everything

Remorse always comes too late

I was the hope of redemption

To redeem my family from poverty

Today I am in a deep pipe of abyss

Hopeless I stand as a dead shepherd to his sheep

My future glory is shattered

Shame I disappointment societies code.

3.5 This Little Life of Mine

Inmate Serial Number 661/13, a 68-year-old wrote the *poem This Little Life of Mine*. He was facing an eighteen-year jail sentence for defilement at the time he authored this poem. Father of four children, he attained secondary education at Monze Academy, and he was Christian by religion. His Father was late while the mother and wife were still alive.

Of all Mays please May

Never be the 2010 May

My legacy crumbled in that May

As I watched my life in dismay

In this little life of mine,

Humbled to tell my story

As mirror brings out a spitting image,

So, I lay my life nude to a little girl

Favour is not upon me

Yes, I can dearly see,

And share my story

My life turned upside down

With a contented mind and good conscience

Overruled by split seconds of immorality

Bagged me into the garbage world, unknown

My liberty thrown away and locked up

In this little life of mine
Bearing regret of all regrettable
Oh, I long to see you again my dear freedom.

3.6 A Bitter Prison

Inmate Serial Number 1288/20 was a male facing a 14-year prison sentence for defilement. Hewas aged 32 and had already served 5 years. The inmate was Christian by religion, married with 3 children, attained secondary education at Luanshya Training School. Both of his parents were alive including his wife. He authored the following poem.

Calamities come, undesirables occur
It is bad and bitter to be found inside
Confined inside
Just like I am now inside as an inmate
Despite been found and confined inside
My mind has erected more and more
I have acquired skills and trades
This makes me not to fill the sentence
It's a bad time to my families and friends who miss me
But it's a good time at the same time as I setup my future

Out of bad things comes a good thing
Out of bitterness comes something sweet
Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion
That is my story
I found a better future from a bitter prison.

3.7 Enlighten My Life

This poem was by prisoner number 1299/20. He is referred to here as Inmate Seven. This is because apart from his name and sentence, no other details about him were known. He was jailed for fifteen years having committed a defilement case. His poem reads follows:

Here the day is dark and dull
And my mind is with worries full
I don't give up nor despair
For the one who can help me is very near
Once I have faith and belief
It will ease all my worries and grief
I shouldn't delay turn to Jesus today
I should go on my knees and pray
Jesus will hear my heartfelt cry
And my tears he will dry
He will touch me with his gentle and healing hand
And once again life will be great and grand
Even if my faith is weak
Jesus is the one I should seek
For in my time of woe and sore
I should go to him with hope in my soul
He will give me a new start
And hope and joy will fill my heart
So, I should turn to him who is love

And receive his blessing from above

And my worries care will ease away

As I start my new day

3.8 The Devil Appeared

The Devil Appeared was written by a male prisoner aged 24, Serial number 1027/18. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for aggravated robbery. Inmate 1027/18 had not provided any educational background. He was Christian by religion. Both father and mother were still alive. The poem reads as below:

Way back, the devil appeared in deceit

Got deceived by choosing a way which had a dead end

I realise it isn't too late to turn back in God's hands

Despite being caged with orange jumpers

On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus

Pick up my Voice to the people of society

Tell them crime does not pay; never forget love is the greatest

Love never gives up and do not lose faith

3.9 Buried

Inmate Serial Number 277/18 was a male of 31 years old serving a 15-year jail sentence for aggravated robbery and had already served 4 years. He was a Christian by religion. His educational background and marital status were unknown. Both mother and father were alive. He authored the following poem:

Ha, Ha, Ha, is my cry

Life is bittersweet beyond my understanding

Being incarcerated is miserable
I think of how I will bury myself
For I see strong and powerful men
Carrying their coffins in prison
This grave is never satisfied
Where should I go and report my situation

All alone in my bed
Fear touches my skin
My heart struggles against the walls
To be buried is the safety way
But there is no one to bury me
The prison wall is my grave
My life is connected to the dead
And this grave is my home forever

I see an army green officer flowering my grave
Always duty focused
And the bell is my duty and my name
The bell is everything in prison
Lock-up come not lock-up
Still my life sees no change,
Their shifts come and go
Their faces change with every shift
But my grave remains the same

Being a prisoner is life rendered useless.

3.10 Bars

Facing a 25-year jail sentence for murder, Inmate Serial Number 391/13 had served 12 years in prison. He was Christian by religion and had attained college education. Both mother and father were alive. He authored the following poem:

At times I feel like poetry crawls behind my cell bars
With my nails am always scratching the rust off the bars
My sentence and bars run concurrently with my life
If one dies, another is free, so I hope I do not die behind these bars
The pen behind this sentence is murder, serving my own life
I have tried to consummate the space between the bars
No pain, the rust between them pricks my life to death

At times I feel like a life of the dead is crawling inside my cell bars
With my teeth am always scratching for freedom on my cell bar
Yet the death inside the bars serves me with a capital punishment
A familiar memory of closed space, friction, and pain bursts
She was a little girl in uniform, now am an adult in uniform.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented the selected poems for this study. The presentation is not according to any thematic or stylistic order. The next chapter gives a stylistic and thematic analysis with a social constructionis perspectives embedded in the analyses of these poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis of Mwembeshi Maximum Prison Poetry

4.0 Introduction

This chapter makes a stylistic and thematic presentation of findings in, and analysis of, the Mwembeshi Maximum Prison poetry. For each of the selected ten poems, there are two subsections. The first subsection is for the stylistics presentation and analysis which explores the literary devices the poem utilises to bring out themes of the poem. At this level, the analysis concerns itself with only the literary stylistic devices that create the poem. The second subsection presents and analyses the themes in the poem. It identifies: (a) the reflexivity expressed as themes in convey the prison lived experience in the poems written by the incarcerated poets, (b) the thematic significance of expressed themes in the process of understanding incarceration and (c) the appreciation of the functionality of the poems in the process of incarceration as a source of rehabilitation.

4.1 Stylistic and Thematic Analysis of the Poems

4.1.1 *Stylistics and Themes in: Bang Bang*

Bang Bang is a poem written by inmate 39/19. *Bang Bang* is an expression that literally means a repeated knocking on, or hitting of, something. The poem has several literary devices it has used and brought out themes that make for an interesting interpretation.

4.1.1.1 *Stylistics of Bang Bang*

(a) *Free Verse*

The poem is written in free verse. The inmate poet experienced freedom of choosing words and conveying meanings to the reader. He depended upon patterned elements like sounds, phrases,

sentences, and words, free of artificiality of a typical poetic expression that is confined to rules and regulations, to communicate his experiences and reflections before and during his life in prison as well as his hope after being released. All the lines are between 5 and 10 and the poem consists of 7 stanzas. *Bang Bang*'s use of free verse does not just show how the inmate poet wishes to enjoy freedom in writing but how averse he is to being bound by the rules and regulations of both life and confinement as will be shown when exploring themes in this poem.

(b) *Onomatopoeia*

The title and first line of the poem are onomatopoeic, they mimic the actual sounds we hear and therefore allows us to visualise by creating a multi-sensory experience that the persona is in a place where there is a crush of objects: "Bang, bang, bang." As the poem unfolds, it becomes clear that the crush of objects is twofold. First, the actual hearing of a table with a hammer by a judge in the court room where the persona is receiving his sentence: "Bang, Bang, Bang, silence in court/The only sound I heard was of papers." Second, the crush between the persona and the law which has led him to appear before the judge: "But my delinquency groups plunged me/Into these long high walls/ For aggravated robbery murder a heinous offence." This "Bang Bang" expression is therefore resounding of these two realities that have separated the persona from his mother, family, and society.

(c) *Parallelism*

Parallelism is a figure of speech in which two or more elements of a sentence (or series of sentences) have the same grammatical structure. These "parallel" elements can be used to intensify the rhythm of language, or to draw a comparison, emphasise, or elaborate on an idea. Structures of distinct levels parallel in *Bang Bang*. These include single verbs such as "love, amend, re-enter, bleeding scars, wounds" (Stanza 4) which are joined by "and", representing a continuum of

emotions from the highest to the lowest. Also, parallel are phrases like “Your tears are heavy to stay in your eyes” (stanza 5) which are related in the sense that heavy tears are often associated with pain and heavy eyes. This parallelism is reinforced with the use of repetition.

(d) *Repetition*

Repetition is a common component of poetry and may appear as a single word or phrase used throughout a poem or as an entire stanza reused repeatedly. The words “bang bang,” “shame,” “mum/mother,” “fruitful womb” is used twice between stanza 1 and 7. These repetitions indicate that persona’s thoughts are concentrated on and concerned more about his parting with his mother and society. It is through this parting that the poet reveals the persona’s prison experience of shame, regret, anguish and love for his mother and life outside the prison. The instance of the metaphoric statements: “To teach the foetus that crime does not pay,” “I see the walls punting at me” (Between stanza 1-7). In these lines, the “foetus” and “walls” are made to possess concrete human traits: the foetus becomes teachable, and the walls can speak. The persona’s foetus is compared to an adult who can be taught on the dangers of crime and the walls are given a voice. All the sentences above violate the selection restrictions in that their subjects, though inanimate, are ascribed actions of animate beings particularly humans like “foetus,” “wall,” “trees,” and “tears.” All this is achieved by the inmate poet’s creative use of parallelism and repetition.

(e) *Adage*

The poet utilised adages and proverbs in this poem, literary devices that have made the persona’s lived experiences relatable as a general fact or truth about the life of an inmate. This device has made it possible for the poem to embody common observations of prison life and for the persona to express his inner emotions about the crime committed. For example, he describes his life in both his family and society as a black sheep when he says in Stanza 1: “umusuku ubi utukishaimpanga”

which can be translated to say *A single bad Sugar Plum brings ridicule to the whole forest*. Then, in Stanza 6, to express his experiences with correctional officers in the rehabilitation process he says: “Uwakwenshaubushikubamutashangabwacha” [*He who has guided you through the night is appreciated at daybreak*]. He uses this phrase to conclude a stanza in which he is expressing gratitude for the services rendered to him by correctional officers saying:

This is the darkest episode of my life
Correctional officers have helped me
Rediscover my potentiality in life
“Uwakwenshaubushikubamutashangabwacha”

4.1.1.2 Themes in *Bang Bang*

(a) *Childbirth as Punishment and Healing*

One of the outstanding themes in the poem *Bang Bang* is a representation of *Childbirth as Punishment and Healing*. The poem equates childbirth to the release from prison and the time in prison as the gestation period when the child develops in his mother's womb. In this case, the prison is the womb, the inmate is the child and society are the woman.

It is an old aged religious notion that a woman suffers in childbirth because she is being punished for wrongdoing. By tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge, Eve not only causes man to fall from grace but condemns womankind to eternal pain in bearing children. This pain in childbearing is deserved as well as a dispenser of natural justice for the restoration of the humanity and divinity of the woman. Using this analogy, the persona sees himself as the punishment of God sent upon society for its failures. That he is an integral part of society; he is co-conspirator in this delinquency and therefore a partaker of this punishment. Therefore, his sentence in prison is a deserved penance and a way of recovering both his humanity and that of society as aptly cited in the following verses:

“umusuku ubi utukishaimpanga”

[A single bad Sugar Plum brings ridicule to the whole forest]

Indeed, I have brought shame to

A fruitful womb of my mother

But my delinquent groups plunged me

Into these long high walls

For aggravated robbery murder a heinous offence

Which I will never be proud of

“To regret is foolishness, to realize is wisdom”

The persona sees the pain or punishment that his bad character has caused his mother to suffer as an extension of the pain in childbearing which was and is supposed to be severed at birth by the cutting of the umbilical cord. As a result, he seeks to return to the very genesis and cause of this pain, which is the womb to make amends:

Mum, it is true I would love to

Re-enter into your fruitful womb to make amends

To stitch those bleeding scars and wounds

To teach the foetus that crime does not pay

“uwenda mupanga euleta makasaya nkalamu”

[He who walks in the forest is the one who brings the feet of a lion]

With this plea, the poem makes child conception to carry symbolic meanings, which extends beyond infancy to adulthood of both the mother and child. It becomes a healing tool and gate to moral recovery, a test of humanity and a signifier of both parental and individual responsibility. The way a child is conceived plays a part in the character formation of the baby, as well as the

survival and wellbeing of the entire household and community. As such, the way the inmate is handled by correctional officers during his time in prison determines the kind of person he shall be upon release into society as shown in these lines:

Every night in my dormitory...
I see the walls punting at me
Saying shame on you, your mum bleeds.
This is the darkest episode of my life
Correctional officers have helped me
Rediscover my potentiality in life
“uwakwensha ubushiku bamutasha ngabwacha”

[He who has guided you through the night is appreciated at daybreak]

The adage translated as “*He who has guided you through the night is appreciated at daybreak*” is a representation of the inmate’s prison lived experience. The night signifies the prison and dawn, or daybreak signifies the day of discharge. Now, the discovering of personal potential by the inmate between the dusk and dawn depends on the guidance given by correctional officers and it is within the same guidance that idea of recidivism is propagated. In the poem, the correctional officers are presented as the guides and guardians of the inmate through the night, that is, the prison lived experienced of the inmate and a state of loss of sight and personal direction. As such, the dawn is not just the day of discharge but the process of rehabilitation. In the appreciation of the dawn, the inmate propagates the idea of recidivism reduction under the condition of good guidance from correctional officers as evidence in the following stanza:

This is the darkest episode of my life
Correctional officers have helped me

Rediscover my potentiality in life

“Uwakwensha ubushiku bamutasha ngabwacha”

[*He who has guided you through the night is appreciated at daybreak*]

(b) *Disillusionment Filled with Love, Hope and Regret*

Disillusionment is the theme that the poem explores along with the motif of regret. When reality of imprisonment is revealed to the inmate, it brings in disillusionment. Disillusionment is disappointment and pessimism that is felt by the inmate when he realises that something that was thought to be true was not as shown in the verse: “but my delinquency groups plunged me into these long high walls.” The inmate realises the price of crime and his delinquency. Accordingly, he becomes disillusioned, and it causes a feeling of disenchantment and disparagement towards society and his mother.

While there is an emotional connection between disillusionment and the motif of regret, often the persona feels disillusioned by the process of imprisonment and realises how a disappointment he is to his mother. Throughout the poem, the persona creates variations of this motif of regret while reflecting on the process of rehabilitation. The thematic expression is moderate, giving the reader a chance to reflect upon the poem as the second stanza shows:

Indeed, I have brought shame to

A fruitful womb of my mother

Born in the family of seven

I happen to be the “black sheep”

Mum your wish was to see a brighter future.

The persona symbolises his mother's womb as a fruitful sacred place of love and morality which his act of murder has defiled and therefore severed him from his mother's love. He further individualises himself as the black sheep of the family. Black sheep is an idiom used to describe an odd or disreputable member of a group, especially within a family. By applying this idiom, the poet expresses regret, disgrace and shame of his acts which are disreputable to his mother, associates, and country. In stanza two, he expressed deep regret and anguish for the emotional pain he caused his mother:

Mum, it is true I would love to
Re-enter into your fruitful womb to make amends
To stitch those bleeding scars and wounds
To teach the foetus I that crime does not pay

They also express emotions of cause and effect, in the beginning of the poem, the persona express shame, love for family, while the "Re-enter" expresses transformation and amend. In line three and four, it almost seems as though he is expressing emotions of correcting the mistakes he has made as the following statement show: "To stitch those bleeding scars and wounds, to teach the foetus that crime does not pay". The use of the word "foetus" represents introspection and purity, while the stitching and teaching represents correcting the mistakes made in the past.

In stanza four and five, the persona develops a thematic thread of hope and belief to not just make amends but become a better person. He says:

This is the darkest episode of my life
Correctional officers have helped me
Rediscover my potentiality in life
"Uwakwensha ubushiku bamutasha ngabwacha"

[He who has guided you through the night is appreciated at daybreak]

I have the hope and belief

That one day the Zambian citizens

Whose trust I betrayed will embrace me

“To error is human, to forgive is divine.”

That the persona does not just express shame and regret, but love and hope coupled with a voluntary willingness to make amends for the crime he committed, it shows that the writer as an inmate has accepted rehabilitation and the way out of his condition. This is well summarised in the verse that says, “To regret is foolishness, to realize is wisdom.” The inmate has categorised his past as foolishness and chosen reformation as wisdom.

4.1.2 Stylistics and Themes in: A President in a Correctional Facility

A President in a Correctional Facility is poem that was written by inmate 1182/18. This poem employed several literary devices and had themes that are explored in the following sections.

4.1.2.1 Stylistics of A President in a Correctional Facility

(a) Parallelism and Repetition

The poem uses parallelism to create a relationship between two seemingly opposing concepts and realities: prison and comfort. This is best illustrated in the line: “24/7 am guarded, respected highly by these wardens”. Using parallelism, the poem also shows how the persona feels that he is an extraordinary citizen equal to a President with security detail that works day and night every day and therefore wishes to be an ordinary citizen who can live his life freely. This enabled the poem to create irony starting with the title and made this irony a motif to fully express his prison experience.

The parallelism in the poem has been ornamented by the repetition of grammatical structures including ‘bodyguards’, ‘slaps’ and ‘shoulders’ to enhance the relationship between comfort and discomfort, that is, creating a sense that, in general, they are more alike than opposite. This causes the reader to reflect on how this relationship between prison and comfort is possible:

24/7 am guarded...

The bodyguards are always watching me

...They slap my shoulders as they count

My shoulder skin has started itching

From the slaps of different bodyguards

.... But better days of my victory are coming

One day I will live like an ordinary citizen.

(b) *Metaphors and Similes*

The persona has heightened the sharing of his prison lived experience by using both metaphors and similes to elaborate his daily way of life. He has used the metaphor of calling himself as inmate to be “A President” who is “guarded 24/7” and therefore, the experience of serving the prison sentence as “the presidency”. Having used this metaphor, the persona has employed similes to create a satirical irony between the concept of President as we know it in our daily lives and the kind of President that he is in a prison: “But I wonder why am always counted, counted like money is the manner of this presidency.” The simile “like” has been used to recreate the daily roll calls and to express the emotional distrust between the inmate and the officers: “they count me like am a counterfeit, in here am always a number.” Although the persona shows despair about the kind of his presidency which reduces him to nothing but a number, he ends the poem with hope and

expressed ultimate desire that utilises the simile to say: “One day I will live like an ordinary citizen.”

(c) *Satire*

The inmate uses satire as a literary device for the artful ridicule of incarceration or as a means of exposing or correcting the process of prisonisation. The persona uses satire in order to utilise tones of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation towards the subject of corrections which he finds flawed with the hope of creating awareness and subsequent change towards inhuman acts such as:

They slap my shoulders as they count
My shoulder skin has started itching
From the slaps of different bodyguards
They count me like am a counterfeit

The inmate uses satire to utilize humour in order to convey meaning and fulfil the purpose of exposing the pains of incarceration. By using satire, the inmate intends to ridicule the prison system and its flaws, discrepancies, and inadequacies as a means of provoking the reader and challenging its viewpoints.

4.1.2.2 *Themes in A President in a Correctional Facility*

Dehumanisation and Servitude

The poem *A President in a Correctional Facility* ably discloses, and illuminates hope for a life after prison while at the same time criticises the dehumanising processes and restrictions, if not servitude, that manifest in a maximum correctional facility. The persona sees the confinement as an onslaught on his humanity to an extent of reducing him to a subhuman status and mere statistic: “They count me like am a counterfeit/In here am always a number.” Accordingly, the persona

considers each day spent in prison as a battle he fights with an unwavering hope for a victory to recover his humanity like any other citizen:

But better days of my victory are coming

Coming after the expiring date of my (E.P.D)

One day I will live like an ordinary citizen.

At crux of winning this daily battle is the coping strategy that persona employs to view and interpret his servitude. Rather than seeing himself as a nonentity, the persona describes himself as “A President” because just like a President of a nation is given bodyguards who look after him all day and every day, he too has correctional officers watching after him. This is ably expressed in Stanza 1:

24/7 am guarded

Respected highly by these wardens

Their guns trailing on me

This prison experience pains less to me

The body guards are always watching me

Even when I do not think of escaping

In the last line of this stanza, the persona shows that in fact, although he is as important as a President who is guarded 24/7, his situation is different because the guarding is not to protect him from vices of society but to protect society from him. As such everyday objects in a prison such as a guns and wardens take on multiple meanings with both internal and extraneous qualities in this poem. The guns in the poems do not trail anything or anyone against the persona but they trail him as a social misfit. The wardens are personal bodyguards who both ensure that inmate is safe and transforms into a better citizen but at the same that society is safe without him. This reality

makes the poem highlight the dehumanising relationship and distrust that exist between the inmate and the warden which the persona likens to that of a slave and his master. Just like a slave master considers his slave as his own property, the warden treats the inmate as a mere static and a source of income: “They count me like am a counterfeit/In here am always a number.” Further, just like a slave master inflict pain on their slaves in line of duty, the wardens cause extreme pain on the inmates when conducting their roll call. This is evidenced in Stanza 2 when the persona complains that:

They slap my shoulders as they count
My shoulder skin has started itching
From the slaps of different bodyguards.

There two ways by which the person helps himself. First, he sees himself as a President, the prison as his presidential palace and the wardens as the presidential security detail. This helps the inmate as he stays in prison not to allow a sense of unworthiness to break him down. Second, he keeps his faith alive that the dehumanisation is going through is just a phase whose end is at hand. This is how the inmate poet concludes his satirical poem:

But better days of my victory are coming
Coming after the expiring date of my (E.P.D)
One day I will live like an ordinary citizen.

4.1.3 Stylistics and Themes in: *It is Useless*

It is Useless, a poem written by inmate 719/19, has several literary devices and themes. The following sections analyses these starting with the stylistics and ending with the interpretation of themes.

4.1.3.1 *Stylistics of It is Useless*

(a) *Anaphora*

Commenting on anaphora, Adugna and Garoma (2017) explain that this is a rhetorical device that features repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences, phrases, or clauses. Through this repetition, a composer or poet adds emphasis and reinforcement to the meaning being conveyed. In the first stanza, the inmate poet uses anaphora by repeating the word “Yes” at the beginning of each verse:

Yes, it is useless

Yes, this life is useless

Yes, year in year out we toil

Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

Through repetition of the word “Yes,” the poet reinforces to the reader that the life the persona is describing is not worth living because it is futile. In addition, the anaphora creates the effect for a reader that the life of the persona is as useless as that of the inmate poet and even the reader himself. This makes the reader to immediately identify with the persona and seek to understand what made the persona reach this conclusion.

In the last stanza, the inmate poet used the repetition of the phrase “That she did”:

So, she got the wish of what she wanted

That she did

That she did fell in love with a wrong man

That she did

A shameful deed

Shameful indeed

Abortion, a crime of passion

That is what he did.

This repetition of the phrase “That she did” emphasises to the reader that the uselessness of life brought about by “falling in love with a wrong man” and ending up committing “abortion, a crime of passion, is not imaginary. It is real and was committed by a person. In fact, that this act of “abortion, a crime of passion” is happening even as the reader is reading the poem. As a result, this allows the reader to engage immediately with the story.

(b) *Symbolism*

Apart from using anaphora to deliver his message, the inmate poet used symbolism to reinforce the euphemistic sexual references of indecent assault and how adulthood comes with the loss of childhood innocence. This is contained in Stanza 3:

A fertilized egg we all start life

Yet humanity surges to crime

The egg that the poet speaks of in this stanza is not an actual egg but symbolises both the zygote and childhood days before a human being becomes of age. The poet picks on the egg as an appropriate archetypal symbol of fertility and birth. Even more, given that an egg is a delicate thing which breaks when not easily handled, he equates human life to be as such, delicate and easy to break hence the lines:

Generations come

Inmates go

Man, still commits crime

Mostly in his prime

A fertilized egg we all start life
Yet humanity surges to crime.

(c) *Rhyme*

In this poem, the inmate poet mixed used various rhyming schemes. From the first to the third stanzas, the poet used couplet rhyming scheme (AA):

Yes, it is useless
Yes, this life is useless
Yes, year in year out we toil
Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

Generations come and go
Just like inmates also
Man keeps on committing crime
Mostly in his prime

A fertilized egg we all start life
Yet humanity surges to crime and strife.

For the first stanza, however, the poet did not just use end rhyme or tail rhyme – rhyme coming at the end of two successive lines. He also used initial or head rhyme. This is rhyme that occurs at the beginning of a line and in this case, the word “Yes” and sound “Ye”:

Yes, it is useless
Yes, this life is useless
Yes, year in year out we toil
Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

Further in this first stanza is the use of alliteration in the third verse, that is, the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words in a line: “Yes, year in year out we toil.”

The inmate poet employed both couplet and triplet rhyme (AAA) schemes in the fourth stanza coupled with initial or head rhyme:

So she got the wish of what she wanted
That she did
That she did fell in love with a wrong man
That she did
A shameful deed
Shameful indeed
Abortion, a crime of passion
That is what he did.

The use of rhyme has given this poem a beautiful flow with rhythm that facilitates the reader’s recalling of the subject of pursuing forbidden love which leads to committing crimes.

4.1.3.2 *Themes in It is Useless*

Futility of Life and Labour

This poem chronicles events and reflections that fuelled the crime of passion and the persona’s conclusion about life in light of this crime and its consequences. This chronicle builds the theme of life and labour being futile or useless. The persona seems not to be just a literary construct but a shadow from the past of the inmate poet. This is particularly because the crime the poem deals with is the crime which the poet committed. Further, the poet is a Bible believer and the opening stanza invokes the biblical Ecclesiastes injunction that “everything is useless” and that “there is

nothing new under the sun.” The separation between the persona and poet only happens when the persona comments on the poet’s past and character as “a wrong man.”

The persona seems to reveal that the inmate poet has had time to reflect on his crime and that of other inmates. Also, that the inmate has had time to examine how many of those that get incarcerated really transform to become better citizens and more, importantly, admit that whoever they victimised did not deserve such victimization. Unfortunately, the conclusion of the poem is that all labour the state puts in to rehabilitate the inmates yields nothing because:

Yes, year in year out we toil
Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

Generations come and go
Just like inmates also
Man keeps on committing crime
Mostly in his prime

The persona is also not remorseful for his actions and does not regret having indecently assaulted the woman:

So she got the wish of what she wanted
That she did
That she did fell in love with a wrong man
That she did
A shameful deed
Shameful indeed
Abortion, a crime of passion

That's what he did.

Given this reality, the persona concludes that life is useless just as the act of imprisoning him was useless because neither did it bring back to life the aborted foetus nor made him repent from what he did. As far as the persona is concerned every woman who falls in love with a wrong man deserves to be assaulted indecently.

4.1.4 Stylistics and Themes in: *The Work I Never Knew*

The Work I Never Knew is a poem written by Inmate 202/19. Several literary devices and themes are evident in the poem which makes it remarkable for the study.

4.1.4.1 *Stylistics of the Work I Never Knew*

(a) *Symbolism*

The poem opens with the symbol of a “passport”. The inmate euphemistically uses this symbol as a way of avoiding using the actual term of the document that authorises the incarceration of someone, that is, arrest warrant. Given that the term arrest warrant conjures up images punitive prison experiences, the inmate poet chose to use the word passport to show that he considers himself a pilgrim of life and that the prison is not his final destination. He is in prison only as a traveller and now he is working on concluding this journey with the help of the preacher man:

Crime is the passport entry

A travelling document into these walls

How do I end this?

I ask the preacher man who tells me to repent.

(b) *Parallelism and Repetition*

Commenting on the use of parallelism, Baldick (2001) argues that the effect of parallelism is usually one of balanced arrangement achieved through minimal repetition of the same syntactic form. This means that parallelism demonstrates equal importance between ideas and by so doing, it strengthens those ideas since its aim is to re-enforce and re-emphasise ideas (Yeibo, 2011). This is exactly what this poem does. The inmate poet employed parallelism with minimal repetition and use of the words “darkness” and “future” to describe his lived experiences in prison and anticipated release from jail as nothing but darkness which has no salvation the preacher man is trying to proclaim:

The preacher man tells me darkness
Dark moment of its own kind
I presume the prison as the darkness
An opaque colour not transparent of justice

Ahead of me, I see no future
God says “I plan your future”
A thought to give you home
What is this future again?
What home I ask him?

As far as the persona is concerned in this poem, life is a vicious circle of torment as this stanza puts it:

In stillness of the night with
No sleep to my eyes
But watch over night lamenting remorsefully

A pillow to witness as a water to reveal
The secret, hidden movies of my dream
The future I hoped for
A meaningless stigmatized, laughingstock
This world welcomes and shuts everything.

(c) *Similes*

The poem used similes to effectively convey the worries and troubles of prison life. Consider the following lines: “I presume the prison as the darkness”, “Yet trouble and worry are part of me, handling them like a hot pan/Tears flowing like a river”, “When eaten, crime is like poison”, “A pillow to witness as a water to reveal”. The similes “like” and “as” create a continuum of thought in emphasising the hardships of prison life.

(d) *Metaphors*

There are several metaphors that the inmate poet employed to show the weight of pain, regret and worries the persona experiences in prison. The correctional facility was described metaphorically in the poem as “An opaque colour not transparent of justice” and “a deep pipe of abyss”. The crime committed was defined as a forbidden tree whose fruit is suffering: “Hard labour, misery is its fruit” and is “A killer that kills slowly but fatal”. Further, the crime is described to be “sharper and thin food for thought/Endangering everyone who touches it”. The use of these metaphors allows the inmate poet to communicate effectively to the reader about the nature of crime and the consequences that come with finding yourself guilty of any crime.

4.1.4.2 *Themes in The Work I Never Knew*

(a) *Prison as Heaven: The Home of God*

The poem sees the prison walls as the place where God resides and is respected.

Friends, friends, why me alone
In this prison I see all people
Survival is the grace of God
God is acknowledged more here.

Therefore, if it is true that Jesus went to prepare a place for humanity so that where he is those who believe in him should be, the persona is disappointed to find that such a home is a prison. The persona sees the prison walls as a paradigmatic site of the emergence of a kind of Christian anti-heroism comprising isolation, detention, victimhood, and disgrace rather than communion, freedom, victory and eternal grace. As a result, this Home of God he describes as “a deep pipe of abyss” is uniquely a precious site in which rather than enjoying grace and redemption, the imprisoned individual meditates upon them and purges his soul through conversations with God and the preacher man. In these conversations, the persona sees himself as a disillusioned Messiah who found himself in hell in his bid to save many from poverty of righteousness and therefore confronts God with the question of: is this kind of future divinely planned and a better home prepared for his faithful ones?

Ahead of me, I see no future
God says “I plan your future”
A thought to give you home
What is this future again?
What home I ask him?

Like the Biblical Jesus who realised at the last minute that according to his own will but for the Father the cup was not worth it, the persona laments that:

Remorse always comes too late
I was the hope of redemption
To redeem my family from poverty
Today I am in a deep pipe of abyss
Hopeless I stand as a dead shepherd to his sheep
My future glory is shuttered
Shame I disappointment societies code.

(b) *Crime and God*

Interwoven to the idea of seeing prison as the home of God is the theme of *Crime and God* with reflections on the love of God gone wrong due to crime and the consequences thereof, as well as the anguish of imprisonment and regret over having disappointed not just God but friends and family. The emotional connection between anguish and regret is often juxtaposed by the striving for repentance which is problematical for the often-contradictory roles of being a prisoner and a righteous man at the same time. This brings about uncertainty in the persona about whether he can attain the requisite righteousness to change the prospects of his life. This makes him far angry about everything he must deal with, especially the realisation that he committed a crime amidst the love of a God who tells him not to let his heart be troubled. The poem partly reads:

Crime is the passport entry
A travelling document into these walls
How do I end this?
I ask the preacher man who tells me to repent.

In this prison I see all people
Survival is the grace of God
God is acknowledged more here.

Ahead of me, I see no future
God says "I plan your future"
A thought to give you home
What is this future again?
What home I ask him?

Let not your heart be troubled
Yet trouble and worry are part of me
Handling them like a hot pan
Tears flowing like a river
Crying is the new food for my eyes
These have become part of me
"My son do not despise my chastening
I rebuke those I love" says the Lord
Is prison my rebuke? I ask the Lord.

The persona seems to suggest that the repentance and promise of heavenly home is not the true salvation he requires which God should be providing. The true salvation which he requires and would have saved him from even finding himself in prison is redemption from poverty. This is the gospel and lived reality of this gospel he was practicing saving himself and his family that landed him in prison:

Remorse always comes too late
I was the hope of redemption
To redeem my family from poverty
Today I am in a deep pipe of abyss

Hopeless I stand as a dead shepherd to his sheep
My future glory is shuttered
Shame I disappointment societies code.

4.1.5 Stylistics and Themes in This Little Life of Mine

This Little Life of Mine is a poem written by Inmate 661/13. The literary devices and themes the poem utilised are explored in the following sections.

4.1.5.1 Stylistics of This Little Life of Mine

(a) Free verse

The poem is written in free verse with five stanzas. Free versification enabled the inmate poet to make his persona share his defilement story freely without observing any poetic regulation or limitation to words. As such, a clear picture of what happened as the persona puts it: “So I lay my life nude to a little girl” and the consequence of this act is painted in the following lines from the poem:

My legacy crumbled in that May
As I watched my life in dismay
My life turned upside down
Overruled by split seconds of immorality
My liberty thrown away and locked up

Bearing regret of all regrettable

Oh, I long to see you again my dear freedom.

(b) *Epistrophe*

Epistrophe indicates the same word or phrase being retained at the end of successive sentences or clauses. It is also known as epiphora which is the opposite of anaphora. The poem has us epiphora in its first stanza as follows:

Of all Mays please May

Never be the 2010 May

My legacy crumbled in that May

As I watched my life in dismay

The epiphora has repeated the word “May” and created a regular rhyming as well as couplet rhyming with the word “dismay” in the last verse of the stanza. The repetition of “May” has given a striking emphasis to the time when the persona committed a crime that shuttered his life. The message of the poem that defilement is immoral as it shuttered the life of both the victim and victimiser is equally reinforced and made memorable. This literary device has also given the poem a rhythmic start that appeals to the emotions of the reader.

(c) *Apostrophe*

In this poem, the inmate poet the persona addresses inanimate and even absent objects and ideas as if they were human beings and present. In the first stanza, the month of “May” is addressed saying:

Of all Mays please May

Never be the 2010 May

My legacy crumbled in that May
As I watched my life in dismay

Life is described and addressed as a person that can reflect in a mirror, get moved around and be either dressed or undressed as seen in the following lines:

In this little life of mine,
As mirror brings out a spitting image,
So I lay my life nude to a little girl
My life turned upside down

Similarly, “liberty” and “freedom” are addressed as a beloved companion who is locked away from her acquaintance who has accordingly missed her: “My liberty thrown away and locked up/Oh, I long to see you again my dear freedom.” Then immorality is presented as something with hands that can argue with a person and bring him down:

With a contented mind and good conscience
Overruled by split seconds of immorality
Bagged me into the garbage world, unknown

By employing apostrophe, the inmate poet managed to direct the reader’s attention to both these concepts – *May*, *Life*, *Liberty*, *Freedom*, and *Immorality* – and their importance to the theme of the poem. The persona also managed to use apostrophe to express his internal thoughts and feelings to and about *May*, *Life*, *Liberty*, *Freedom* and *Immorality* who unfortunately remained unresponsive to the persona. The month of May of the year 2010 remains a scar on his conscious and he sees his life to be so wasted. Equally, his liberty and freedom are completely violated, and

he can't wait to regain them. He recognises the crime he committed as immoral, and regrets having committed the defilement.

(d) *Metaphor*

The use of apostrophe particularly on the concept of life was heightened by the treatment of the persona's existence as a metaphor. By describing his existence as "This little life of mine" as both the title and motif throughout the poem has helped the person successfully convey how he views his life as something that has been left with almost no purpose at all hence the argument that crime "Bagged me into the garbage world, unknown".

4.1.5.2 *Themes in This Little of Mine*

Tragic Flaw

Inmate 661/13 dealt with the theme of tragic flaw in his "This Little Life of Mine" poem. The Tragic flaw is also known as hamartia or hamartane in, which means "to err." It was Aristotle who introduced this term first in his book the Poetics. He argued that a hero comes to his down because of an "error of judgment" or "fatal flaw."

The persona in the poem is clearly a hero of his story as he describes himself before the crime as a person who was "With a contented mind and good conscience." He exercised his liberties without constraint if his mind and conscience permitted. It is within this unbridled enjoyment of his liberties that a fatal flaw in the form of libido was found in his contented mind and conscience. As a result, self-pleasure became more important to him than the social moral expectations as he explains in the following lines:

In this little life of mine,
Humbled to tell my story

As mirror brings out a spitting image,
So, I lay my life nude to a little girl
With a contented mind and good conscience
Overruled by split seconds of immorality
Bagged me into the garbage world, unknown
My liberty thrown away and locked up
In this little life of mine
Bearing regret of all regrettables
Oh, I long to see you again my dear freedom.

Tragic flaw is used as a theme in this poem for moral purposes: to encourage the reader to keep their character in check not just by their own personal standards but the context they find themselves. Therefore the poet used such literary devices that makes the reader captivated by the story so that they can identify themselves with the persona who is the tragic hero. This identification enables the reader to manifest feelings of pity and fear which in turn helps them to vicariously experience the tragedy of the persona and undergo a cathartic experience of purging themselves of all the bad or immoral desires.

4.1.6 Stylistics and Themes in a Bitter Prison

A Bitter Prison, a poem written by Inmate 1288/20 utilises identifiable literary devices to bring out interesting themes of prison life experiences. It is a poem that has a positive revelation in a negative environment.

4.1.6.1 *Stylistics of A Bitter Prison*

(a) *Free verse*

The poem is written in verse and follows no rules or regulation of poetry. This has given the inmate poet to have a freedom of selecting words to communicate his positive revelation in a negative environment as summarised in his last three verses:

Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion

That is my story

I found a better future from a bitter prison.

(b) *Parallelism and repetition*

The persona used repetition to reinforce the concept of entering and getting confined in small, darkened spaces. By repeating the phrases “found inside” and “confined inside,” the inmate poet parallels the idea of being caught red handed right inside the genitalia of a girl he defiled and now being inside the penitentiary facility. He projects the idea that what went wrong with the former confined inside he entered is that he was found and caught there. This led to a bad and bitter end. But the latter place he is now inside of, although it is also confined and bad to be found there, it has erected the right part of his body, that is, his mind. This has led to better and sweet end as he has acquired skills and trade with which he sees himself setting up his future.

Further, while still playing with the concepts of confined genitalia of a girl as a parallel to the confined space in a prison, the inmate poet parallels the idea of his failure to experience the expected reality because of the end results of the process. While he expected to have sexually enjoyed being inside the girl’s genitalia, he did not as the whole experience became a calamity and undesirable when he was caught and arrested. Similarly, while being confined inside a prison should have been a bitter experience it became a reawakening of his humanity and hope in the

future because he learnt different skills and trade while incarcerated. This parallelism and repetition are well executed in Stanza 1:

Calamities come, undesirables occur
It is bad and bitter to be found inside
Confined inside
Just like I am now inside as an inmate
Despite being found and confined inside
My mind has erected more and more
I have acquired skills and trades
This makes me not to fill the sentence
It's a tough time to my families and friends who miss me
But it is a good time at the same time as I setup my future

(c) Simile

The inmate poet used the simile “like” to juxtapose realities of the narrowness of the genitalia of a girl he defiled and the confinement of a jail cell he is in for committing a crime of defilement:

Calamities come, undesirables occur
It is bad and bitter to be found inside
Confined inside
Just like I am now inside as an inmate

Then he used the simile “as” to liken his story to that of the biblical Samson who found honey in a place that he should otherwise find nothing but rot and excreta:

Out of bad things comes a good thing
Out of bitterness comes something sweet

Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion

That is my story

I found a better future from a bitter prison.

4.1.6.2 *Themes in A Bitter Prison*

Rehabilitation in Confinement

The poem by Inmate poet 1288/20 has eloquently dealt with the intended transformation and restorative justice for the inmates when confined in the prison. The persona in the poem has from the title of it – “A Bitter Prison” – acknowledged that the prison is a bitter place, and the facility itself can be likened to Hades, a place of dead animals: “Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion.” By using the “carcass of a lion” to describe the prison, the persona highlights the idea that incarceration is a dehumanising experience.

Nonetheless, rather than being negative about being in a confined and dehumanising space, the persona projects a positive revelation, that is, the rehabilitation of his mind. He explains that the very “calamities,” “undesirables,” “bad things,” “bitterness,” and “carcass of a lion” became the source of his “good time,” “honey,” and setting up of “a better future.” He explains with precision that this is the case because:

Despite been found and confined inside

My mind has erected more and more

I have acquired skills and trades

This makes me not to fill the sentence

It’s a bad time to my families and friends who miss me

But it’s a good time at the same time as I setup my future

Out of bad things comes a good thing
Out of bitterness comes something sweet
Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion
That is my story
I found a better future from a bitter prison.

This positive revelation has projected the transformation between and through walls that confine inmates in an eloquent and captivating manner. It is a self-discovery that makes a reader wish for every inmate and would persuade communities to receive back the reformed citizen and integrate him in the development processes of society. Even more, it casts a positive life on the rehabilitation programmes and skills training being offered in the Zambia Correctional Service.

4.1.7 Stylistics and Themes in Enlighten My Life

Enlighten My Life is a poem written by Inmate 1299/20. The poem has several literary devices it has used and brought out themes that make for an interesting interpretation.

4.1.7.1 Stylistics of Enlighten My Life

(a) Anaphora

The inmate poet used anaphora, the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive verses, in the last verses of the poem to emphasise the importance of exercising his faith in Jesus Christ in times of trouble and the rewards that accumulate because of practicing that faith:

Even if my faith is weak
Jesus is the one I should seek...
And hope and joy will fill my heart....
And receive his blessing from above

And my worries care will ease away

As I start my new day

(b) *Rhyme*

This poem is unlike all poems in that it is all written using a couplet rhyming scheme. Suffice to say that the first two verses do not necessarily form the couplet rhyme in a perfect scheme but visually. This is called eye rhyme, visual rhyme, or a sight rhyme, in that the two words, “dull” and “full” although spelled similarly, they are pronounced differently. Further, the anaphora at the end of the poem constitutes initial or head rhyme, that is, rhyme that occurs at the beginning of a line and in this case using the word, “And.” Furthermore, the rhythm the poem has attained by this couplet rhyme has been heightened by alliteration using the letters “g” and “h” as in the following lines:

He will touch me with his gentle and healing hand

And once again life will be great and grand

(c) *Symbolism and Imagery*

The poem has rhythmically employed imagery and symbolism to contrast the condition of his life before and after receiving Jesus Christ. Before Jesus Christ comes into his life, the persona describes his condition as a day that is “dark and dull” and his mind to be full of worries and grief while his eyes flow with tears. Then after Jesus Christ comes into his life, the condition of his soul changes as the plea in the title summarises: “Enlighten My Life.” The person's life receives enlightenment through Jesus and becomes rejuvenated. His soul is filled with hope, joy, love, gentleness and healing, and the flowing tears dry up while the dreary day becomes a new day as the following lines show:

... I should go on my knees and pray

Jesus will hear my heartfelt cry
And my tears he will dry...
He will give me a new start
And hope and joy will fill my heart
So, I should turn to him who is love
And receive his blessing from above
And my worries care will ease away
As I start my new day

The way the inmate poet employed the symbolism and imagery made the poem a potent sermon to reader to consider turning to Jesus Christ in times of trouble. This highlights how effective the activities of the chaplaincy in the prisons can be to aid the rehabilitation of inmates. Especially in a country like Zambia that is professed as a Christian Nation in the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic.

4.1.7.2 Themes in Enlighten My Life

Impact of Religious Faith in Offender Reformation

The poem deals with the theme of the influence of religious faith in offender reformation. This theme has significant implications for religious services within a correctional context in Zambia. The poem suggests that there is a relationship between commitment of offenders to faith in Jesus Christ and successful rehabilitation. The more rooted an offender is in the faith in Jesus, the more likely they are to succeed in the process of rehabilitation as illustrated by the verses in the poem that say:

Once I have faith and belief
It will ease all my worries and grief

I shouldn't delay turn to Jesus today
I should go on my knees and pray
Jesus will hear my heartfelt cry
And my tears he will dry
He will touch me with his gentle and healing hand
And once again life will be great and grand

The poem shows that this success in rehabilitation is twofold: personal and community. At personal level, the faith helps the offender to come to terms with his past, repent and forgive himself. This makes the inmate develop a positive attitude towards the prisons and thereby utilises all the necessary opportunities and services such as the chaplaincy to reform. This is summarized by the following verses:

Jesus will hear my heartfelt cry
And my tears he will dry
He will touch me with his gentle and healing hand
And once again life will be great and grand

Then, at community level, the offender sees himself getting reintegrated in society as a responsible citizen and starts their life anew as the following verses illustrate:

Even if my faith is weak
Jesus is the one I should seek
For in my time of woe and sore
I should go to him with hope in my soul
He will give me a new start
And hope and joy will fill my heart

So I should turn to him who is love
And receive his blessing from above
And my worries care will ease away
As I start my new day

This twofold success brought about by religious faith is significant and meaningful in helping to end both infractions in prison and re-arrests in the community. This mitigation of infractions and crime mean reducing or even ending victimisation, crime, and law enforcement costs like Netherlands where some prisons have since been closed. The picture this poem paints about the positive impact of religious faith in prison and re-entry in society is in line with the findings of several studies that have since investigated this matter in various parts of the world such as South Carolina (O'Connor, T. P., 2001), South Australia (Gerace, A. & Day, A. 2010) and Nigeria (Akunesiobike, C. A. 2016). Unfortunately, there are no known such studies that have so far been conducted in Zambia.

4.1.8 Stylistics and Themes in the Devil Appeared

The Devil Appeared is a poem written by Inmate 1027/18. The poem employs literary devices to bring out the theme of Ancestral Moral Authority based on one of the remarkable stories of Jesus Christ in the Bible, the story of the Rich man and Lazarus. The following sections deal with the stylistics employed and then the theme.

4.1.8.1 *Stylistics of the Devil Appeared*

(a) *Symbolism*

The poem opens with the symbolism of “God” and “Devil.” The persona presents himself as a victim of these two deities. He creates an image that suggests that he came face to face with both where got him out of the hands of God where he now yearns to return.

The persona also used the symbol of the “Rich Man” and “Lazarous,” two characters that he uses to represent his past and present, respectively. He uses these symbols to caution society on the dangers of crime.

(b) *Allusion*

An allusion is a word or phrase designed to call something to mind, without mentioning that thing explicitly. The persona used allusion so effectively that any reader familiar with the Holy Bible can recall the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus upon reading just these two verses:

On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus

Pick up my Voice to the people of society

This allusion add depth to the poem and allow the inmate poet to communicate his four-tier lived experiences with the first one being before incarceration and the other three while in prison. The first tier is a confession that the inmate lived a luxurious life of wicked riches just like the rich man in the Bible. This lifestyle of criminal opulence ends him in lace that constitutes the second-tier message. The second-tier communication is that the prison is hell, a receptacle of the society’s worst wayward souls. We understand this because the rich man in the biblical rich man speaks and begs for Lazarous’ help from hell. The third-tier message is that the inmate poet has repented and seeks forgiveness from both God and those he offended hence the verses:

I realise it isn't too late to turn back in God's hands
Despite being caged with orange jumpers
On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus
Pick up my Voice to the people of society
Tell them crime does not pay; never forget love is the greatest
Love never gives up and do not lose faith

The last tier is advocacy, warning people in society to stay away from crime hence the line:

Despite being caged with orange jumpers
On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus
Pick up my Voice to the people of society
Tell them crime does not pay...

We understand and appreciate this advocacy because we remember that the rich man also while suffering in hell, he pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to go and warn his five brothers so that they do not end up in hell: "I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so they will not also end up in this place of torment" (Berean Bible, Luke 16:27-28).

4.1.8.2 *Themes in the Devil Appeared*

Ancestral Moral Authority

The poem deals with the theme of Ancestral Moral Authority particularly the consequences of exalting oneself in self-justification to pursue riches in a wrong manner that is against the established code of behaviour. The allusion of the story of the rich man and Lazarus makes this theme clearly. In the Bible, God is also known as the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22).

Similarly, the devil is known as the Ancient Serpent or Serpent of the Old (Revelation 12:9). Abraham is known as the patriarchy or father of many nations (Genesis 17:4-7) and that this was given to him by the authority of God, the Ancient of Days, he is the father of all those who believe in God and fight against the serpent of the old. As such, when the inmate poet opens the poem with God and the devil being the main characters, and then ends the poem with the allusion of the rich man and Lazarus where Abraham is the mediator, he communicates how important the authority of elders and institutions they represent in society are and the dangers that one suffers for defying this established order.

By likening himself to the rich man who is nameless in the Bible story, the inmate poet communicates how his drifting away from the ancestral moral teachings of love made him lose his humanness. As a result, he ended up in prison where his humanity as an inmate was stripped away completely. The loss of one's humanity in prison is well described by the poem when just like the biblical rich man is nameless and only known by a description of his clothes in purple and fine linen, the persona in the poem nameless and identifies himself by describing the prison uniform. This emphasises the fact that just like the rich man is trapped in evil by his wealth represented by his purple and linen clothes, the inmate is trapped in prison and the prison uniform represents that incarceration as the poem's verse puts it: "Despite being caged with orange jumpers." Inmate 391/13 in his poem, *Bars* discussed earlier, also makes the same nameless but prison uniform self-description when he says: "She was a little girl in uniform, now am an adult in uniform."

While the inmate poet lived like the rich man before he was arrested, in prison, he now lives like Lazarus where he eats crumbs from the affluent table of the Government and his painful wounds of incarceration are being licked for purposes of healing by dogs, that is, his fellow inmates. This allusion reveals the reflections of the inmate poet regarding wealth whose pursuit, albeit in a wrong

way, led him in prison. The persona in the poem says, “Crime does not pay” but “love is the greatest and never gives up.” In these statements, the inmate poet contrasted the wealth of the rich man in hell and the wealth of Abraham in heaven in whose bosom Lazarus finds rest. We see this contrast because Abraham according to the Bible was exceedingly wealthy, yet he is in heaven where a fellow rich man is. This contrast made the inmate poet to make a landmark argument that wealth is not the first-class ticket to hell or heaven. What matters is how you acquire that wealth and use it. Wealth acquired by dubious means and not used for the good of society leads to a terrible end. But wealth acquired according to the established order of the ancestors and God and is used for the greater good leads to a good end. As such, the inmate poet encourages the reader that just like the patriarch Abraham we should “not lose faith” but like Lazarus we should use our deep physical need to become much more sensitive to our deeper spiritual need which is faith. We ought not to use our need and desire for affluent lifestyle to indulge in criminal activities like him the inmate poet who was involved in aggravated robbery.

4.1.9 Stylistics and Themes in: Buried

Powerlessness is a poem written by Inmate 277/18. This poem has several literary devices that are creatively utilised to explore themes about prison life.

4.1.9.1 Stylistics in Buried

(a) Oxymoron

The poem opens with oxymoron clauses in the first two verses: “Ha, Ha, Ha, is my cry/life is bittersweet beyond my understanding.” The pairing of these opposing or antithetical words creates an impression and enhances the concept of uncertainty of life that leads to powerlessness that the poet deals within the poem. The uncertainty of life the poet brings out reflects the reality of crime particularly that although a particular criminal act may give you the things you desire and you may

even get away with it, it is never guaranteed. The moment you are caught, the sweet becomes bitter and the laugh turns to groans. It does not matter how powerful and strong you may be, once the law catches up with you, your end is bad. You suffer the consequences alone to an extent that you wish you were dead and buried:

Ha, Ha, Ha, is my cry
Life is bittersweet beyond my understanding
Being incarcerated is miserable
I think of how will I bury myself
For I see strong and powerful men
Carrying their coffins in prison
This grave is never satisfied
Where should I go and report my situation

In fact, so the poem concludes, you do not have to wish yourself dead because incarceration is death and the prison is the grave itself, the life of inmate is like that of the dead. This is summarised in the following verses:

All alone in my bed
Fear touches my skin
My heart struggles against the walls
To be buried is the safety way
But there is no one to bury me
The prison wall is my grave
My life is connected to the dead
And this grave is my home forever

(b) *Symbolism*

The poet uses the symbol of the grave to describe the nature of the prison and prison lived experiences of an inmate. He sees the prison as a place of the dead just like the grave. He also uses the un-satisfaction nature of the grave to describe the congestion in the prison because inmates keep on being admitted in the correctional facility without regard of its capacity, the description of the lived experiences of the inmate poet which he describes as “Being incarcerated is miserable.” Is heightened by this symbol of the grave, it also shows that all that the inmate poet experienced in prison is sadness, bitterness, and the complete loss of his life as the last verse of the poem concludes: “Being a prisoner is life rendered useless.”

Another symbol that the inmate poet used is the bell to depict what his life had become. Although he may have lost his life but whatever had remained of it was a duty call and warning sign to every vigilant member of society like the warder that crime is bad:

I see an army green officer flowering my grave
Always focused on his duty
And the bell is my duty and my name
The bell is everything in prison
Lock-up come not lock-up....

Unfortunately, this warning call only works for others but not the inmate poet because he was already incarcerated and suffering the consequences of his misdeed:

The bell is everything in prison
Lock-up come not lock-up
Still my life sees no change
Their shifts come and go

Their faces change with every shift

But my grave remains the same

The bell symbol also conjures up images of the routine duties of inmates and warders in prison especially when combined with the verses: “Their shifts come and go/their faces change with every shift/But my grave remains the same.” This raises a question of what purpose the duty of the warder and the prison sentence serve if the life of the inmate does not change as this poem suggests.

(c) *Anaphora*

The poem reaches its denouement with anaphora, repeating the word “their” at the beginning of successive verses in the last stanza. This repetition emphasis is the persona’s conclusion about the purpose of incarceration and prison. Unlike other poems examined earlier, this poem suggests that the correctional facility does not serve the interests of the inmate, but other people represented by the prison officers. This explains why the persona sees the prison officers as wreaths or flowers on the grave. Flowers laid on any grave makes it look beautiful, but this does not change the reality that what is in the grave is not beautiful but rotting dead. This symbolism conveys a message that prison officers make the correctional facility look beautiful yet the life experiences of the inmate inside are terrible. They work merely as a duty to the prison system but not in service of the inmate. This is the analogy in the last stanza that the anaphora that concludes it emphasis:

I see an army green officer flowering my grave

Always duty focused

And the bell is my duty and my name

The bell is everything in prison

Lock-up come not lock-up

Still my life sees no change,

Their shifts come and go
Their faces change with every shift
But my grave remains the same
Being a prisoner is life rendered useless.

4.1.9.1 *Themes in Buried*

Powerlessness

This poem is anchored on the theme of powerlessness or emasculation. The theme is articulated through the complaints of the persona about how he lost his freedom and autonomy. Self-initiative and independence were destroyed as the persona suggested to have been denied control over his daily decisions but follow a structured schedule and strict boundaries and limits of the facility to organise his daily routine under careful and continuous surveillance as shown in these verses:

All alone in my bed
Fear touches my skin
My heart struggles against the walls...
The prison wall is my grave
My life is connected to the dead...
I see an army green officer flowering my grave
Always duty focused
And the bell is my duty and my name
The bell is everything in prison
Lock-up come not lock-up
Still my life sees no change.

The result of living under such a correctional setting characterized by a network of rules and regulations was that rather than transforming the inmate, it made him useless as the poem suggests in its concluding line: “Being a prisoner is life rendered useless.”

The implication of this reality is that such an offender has completely lost the capacity to rely on internal organisation and deliberate self-imposed personal limits to guide their actions and restrain their conduct. The day he may be released, re-arrest is inevitable for he would no longer be able to do anything on his own especially refraining from doing those things that are ultimately harmful or self-destructive.

Given that the persona felt completely emasculated, he developed interpersonal distrust and suspicion hence the question in the last verse of the first stanza: “Where should I go and report my situation.” This question explains the preceding lines that say:

Being incarcerated is miserable
I think of how I will bury myself
For I see strong and powerful men
Carrying their coffins in prison
This grave is never satisfied

These lines show that the persona lives in constant fear for his life hence thinking about how he can bury himself, that is, hide himself. The people in his immediate environment that he describes as “strong and powerful men carrying coffins” appear to be poised to take advantage of his weakness or exploit his carelessness or inattention. What makes the persona feel more powerless is that these people’s appetites are like the grave which is insatiable so there is nothing he can do to stay alive apart from hiding.

The reality painted by the poet in this verse is consistent with what some studies have established elsewhere that inmates live in constant fear of being exploited in prisons such that they learn to project a tough convict veneer of potential violence that keeps all others at a distance (Haney 2002, McCorkle, 1992).

The danger of this “tough convict veneer” as a survival strategy is that the persona in the second stanza becomes alienated just like a dead body in the grave and he has no one else to keep him safe:

All alone in my bed
Fear touches my skin
My heart struggles against the walls
To be buried is the safety way
But there is no one to bury me
The prison wall is my grave
My life is connected to the dead
And this grave is my home forever

The persona does not even count on himself to bury himself, which is, defend himself from exploitation, shows that he has become alienated both from others and himself. He is no longer capable of authentic social interaction with others and himself. The result is complete social withdrawal and diminished sense of self-worth and personal value where the prisoner feels his “life is connected to the dead” because in the world of the living, as poem concludes, it has been made worthless by incarceration: “Being a prisoner is life rendered useless rendered useless”.

Hany (2002) argues that this isolation and loss of self-worth comes from such things as denying inmates their basic privacy rights, and loss of control over mundane aspects of their existence, living in small and sometimes extremely cramped and deteriorating spaces where they have little or no control over the identity of the person with whom they must share that space, lack of options over when they must get up or go to bed, and when or what they may eat which characterise a typical correctional facility. These realities are a constant reminder to the inmate about their compromised social status and stigmatised social role as prisoners which has potential to make them come to think of themselves as, and accept that thinking that they are, social misfits who deserve only the degradation and stigma to which they have been subjected while incarcerated.

4.1.10 *Stylistics and Themes in Bars*

Bars is a poem written by inmate 277/18. This poem employed several literary devices and had themes that worth exploring.

4.1.10.1 *Stylistics of Bars*

(a) *Free Verse*

In a bid to convey the prison lived experience of the persona, the poem is written in free verse. This has given the poem a greater freedom for using a wide array of words and conveying the meaning of his prison life using pun, parallelism, repetition, and symbolism in a manner that is free from typical poetic expressions.

(b) *Pun*

The poem has employed pun as a literary device where he has used words with similar or identical sounds but with different meanings to make the poem witty yet conveying a serious lived experience of both the murder he committed and the prison sentence he is serving. In the first

stanza, the persona has used the word “pen” to convey both his writing and capitalizing on the sound of the word to talk about his pain: “The pen behind this sentence is murder, serving my own life.” Further, he has throughout the poem used the words “cell” and “bar” to talk about his space in the prison as well as the biologic cells of his body particularly the resistance of his body to accept what happened and he is going through. For instance, in the first stanza, the persona says, “At times I feel like poetry crawls behind my cell bars/with my nails am always scratching the rust off the bars.” By leaving out the word cell in the second line, the persona creates an image he completes in the third line which shows that when he uses the word “cell” he is talking about his body and life which the prison bars have incarcerated: “My sentence and bars run concurrently with my life.” As such when cell bars of the prison break, his life will be free and when his body cells die, the prison bars will be free from him: “If one dies, another is free, so I hope I don’t die behind these bars.”

(c) *Parallelism*

In the poem *Bars* the persona uses parallelism to elaborate the idea of prisonisation with an emotional appeal, which is situated in the mode and manner of his use of parallelism in elaborating the prison space and his body giving up on incarceration, “My sentence and bars run concurrently with my life, if one dies, another is free, so I hope I don’t die behind these bars.” The persona is not only speaking about his prison sentence, but parallel to his prison sentence is his life which runs concurrently with his sentence and the bars that confine him. By using parallelism, the persona is also castigating the callousness of man’s inhumanity through the process of incarceration. The persona is aware of how parallel his life and sentence run. With the use of parallelism, he elaborates how he wishes his life does not end before his sentence; “so I hope I don’t die behind these bars.” This effective use of parallelism stirs the idea of hope in the poem.

Further, the use of parallelism is all part of the persona's effective employment of emotional appeal that should evoke a wide sympathetic reaction from his audience about his prison space that causes him pain, the sentence and the bars that confine his life to the walls and the symbiosis between life, death, and his sentence.

(d) *Repetition*

The poem "Bars" the poet has used repetition to achieve many different ends, ranging from emphasising a particular point to making a poem easier to memorize. Repetition is employed in swaying the emotions of his audience. The persona employs this strategy in "Bars," where, for example, he repeatedly appeals to the outside world through the repetition of words such as; "uniform, death, bar and sentence" which are words that constitute the life of an inmate, by using these words, the inmate describes prison life as a uniform process which separates the inmate from society, the repetition of the word "Sentence and Bars" continuously emphasises the stress and frustrations of confinement while presenting death as a possible outcome of incarceration.

The persona here therefore positions words like; "death, bars, uniform and sentences" as tools for making the prison space visible, both towards oneself and as seen by others. It is a way in which he positions himself in the prison space through the words repeated, whilst also acknowledging the high possibility of death among serving inmates through the repetition of the word death, the uniform as a symbol of incarceration, while the words sentence, and bar are used to emphasise confinement. The repetitions of these words create a visual image of the prison space and its inhabitants.

It is imperative to also note the inmate also uses repetition as a powerful tool to describe the life experienced in prison. The effect of this device is not only to draw the audience's attention to the

poet's message of the prison lived experience, but to elicit and enlist the audience's sympathy, support on his side as well as the entire prisonisation process.

(e) *Symbolism*

Symbolism is to convey the hidden meaning to the reader or listener. It tells about artistic expression and represents abstract ideas. A writer can use a person, place, word, action, and object as a symbol. To convey the prison mood and emotion, the persona in "Bars" uses symbolism. In this poem, the poet talks about death and sentence in parallel. Death and the sentence here are used as concurrent symbol for incarceration. The death in the poem not only symbolises the end of life, but the hardships of prison life, the sentence symbolises the life lived in prison which is dependent on the death symbol that lingers around prison and the confinement system. The word death in the poem is used for the acceptance of the ending of both life and the prison sentence; "My sentence and bars run concurrently with my life, if one dies, another is free." The persona extends the symbol of death and the sentence to express the theme of freedom, here the death of death itself becomes the freedom of the prison sentence and the day of discharge is symbolised as death which extends into the freedom of an inmate.

4.1.10.2 *Themes in Bars*

Isolation and Fear

The poem *Bars* shows a craving in the inmate poet to be free and experience a normal life in a human community and the possibility that this freedom may never come invokes fear and desperation. This is the theme of isolation and fear that is present throughout this poem. On the most obvious level, we see this isolation and fear when the persona says:

My sentence and bars run concurrently with my life

If one dies, another is free, so I hope I don't die behind these bars...

At times I feel like a life of the dead is crawling inside my cell bars
With my teeth am always scratching for freedom on my cell bar

The hope of the persona not to die in prison is the proper illustration of the desire to experience post-prison free world. Even more, the scratching on the cell bars and consummating of the spaces between these bars comes from the need to feel that he is not isolated and alone but in touch with reality, with something in the real world. Unfortunately, each time he touches these bars they remind him of his crime and how his life has degenerated as these verses illustrate:

I have tried to consummate the space between the bars
No pain, the rust between them pricks my life to death
With my teeth am always scratching for freedom on my cell bar
Yet the death inside the bars serves me with a capital punishment
A familiar memory of closed space, friction and pain bursts
She was a little girl in uniform, now am an adult in uniform.

The verses capture both the physical and emotional effects of the pervasive insidious psychological danger that often stalks the inmate and openly reveal the crime of defilement he committed including the age of his victim through the imagery of the uniform, she wore and the prison uniform he now wears.

4.2 Conclusion

The stylistic analysis of poetry written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility has brought out seventeen literary devices, namely: free verse, repetition, parallelism, symbolism, metaphors, similes, imagery, satire, proverbs, parables, oxymoron, anaphora, alliteration, epistrophe, apostrophe, allusion, and rhyme. These literary devices were used to help

bring abstract prison lived experiences of inmates to life in a manner that captures a reader's attention and makes them vicariously share into a life experience in a typical Zambian correctional facility.

The thematic analysis established eleven themselves that meticulously codes a complete lived experience of an inmate. The poems include Childbirth as Punishment, Disillusionment, Dehumanisation and Servitude, Futility of Life and Labour, Crime and God: Prison as a Home of God, Tragic Flaw, and Rehabilitation in Confinement, Religious Faith in Offender Reformation, Ancestral Moral Authority, Powerlessness, Isolation and Fear. The analysis of these themes has shown how inmates used poetry to profile the circumstances that led them to prison, what prison had been like to them, and their fears and hopes for the future.

The next chapter provides concluding discussions of the study and providing clear implications that the findings and analyses thereof by this study have on policy, programs and practice of the Zambia Correctional Services in general and the future studies on poetry by inmates and related areas of interest established through the themes.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Final Findings

5.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter analysed the themes and stylistics of Mwembeshi Maximum Prison poetry. It demonstrated how the stylistics were employed in a way that brings out the themes in the poem and how these themes socially construct the prison lived experiences of inmates. This chapter discusses these findings through a critical reflection about the nature and significance of these findings in relation to the research objectives in Chapter One. The first objective sought to explore the emergent themes of selected poems by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility. The second objective was to investigate the stylistic content of the selected poems. The last object was to examine the significance of the themes and stylistic content of the selected poems in relation to the prison experience under the Zambia Correctional Service. The following sections discuss the final findings and conclusions in the respective order of the objectives.

5.1 Stylistics Content in Prison Poetry of Mwembeshi Maximum Prison

The study established that the ten selected poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility had stylistic content. This content included seventeen literary devices namely: free verse, parallelism, repetition, metaphors, similes, symbolism, imagery, anaphora, rhyme, alliteration, proverbs, adage, parables, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, epistrophe, apostrophe, satire, allusion, and pun. Each of these literary devices that constituted the stylistic content of the poems was used to bring out the themes that are discussed in the subsequent section and to effectively communicate their implications for policy and practice in Zambia Correctional Service.

5.1.1 *Free Verse*

Apart from one poem, all the poems analysed in this study used free verse. This means that the inmate poets depended upon patterned elements like sounds, phrases, sentences, and words, free of the artificiality of a typical poetic expression that is confined to rules and regulations, to communicate their experiences and reflections before and during their life in the prison as well as their hopes and fears in post-incarceration phase of their lives. The use of free verse helped the inmate poets to share their lived experiences more as a story that is easily relatable to the reader. It also helped them to enjoy the freedom of sharing their story using whichever words their vocabulary could afford.

It is important to note that the wide use of free verse is also reflective of the level of exposure to poetic writing and training of inmate poets as well as their African story telling background. It was also reflective how the inmate poets are averse to being bound by the rules and regulations of both life and confinement which may explain why they were inmates in the first place.

5.1.2 *Parallelism and Repetition*

The study established that eight of the poems employed parallelism and repetition. Parallelism demonstrates equal importance between ideas and by so doing, strengthens those ideas since its aim is to re-enforce and re-emphasise ideas (Yeibo, 2011). Usually, parallelism creates a balanced arrangement of thoughts that is achieved through minimal repetition of the same syntactic form (Baldick, 2001). This is how it is usually combined with repetition, the recurrent use of a single word or phrase throughout a poem or as an entire stanza.

The poem *A President in a Correctional Facility* for example used parallelism and repetition to create a relationship between two opposing concepts and realities: prisonisation and comfort when

it says: “24/7 am guarded, respected highly by these wardens”. Then used repetition to reinforce this idea by recurrently using words “bodyguards,” “slaps” and ‘shoulders’:

24/7 am guarded...
The bodyguards are always watching me
...They slap my shoulders as they count
My shoulder skin has started itching
From the slaps of different bodyguards
.... But better days of my victory are coming
One day I will live like an ordinary citizen.

In an analogous manner, the poem *The Work I Never Knew* by Inmate Serial Number 202/19 used parallelism and repetition of words like “darkness” and “future” to explain how life is a vicious circle in the context of his lived experiences in the correctional facility and anxieties about his post-prison life. The poem partly reads:

The preacher man tells me darkness
Dark moment of its own kind
I presume the prison as the darkness
An opaque colour not transparent of justice

Ahead of me, I see no future
God says “I plan your future”
A thought to give you home
What is this future again?
What home I ask him?
In stillness of the night with

No sleep to my eyes
But watch over night lamenting remorsefully
A pillow to witness as a water to reveal
The secret, hidden movies of my dream
The future I hoped for
A meaningless stigmatized, laughingstock
This world welcomes and shatters everything.

The poems used these literary devices to not only to draw the audience's attention to the poet's message of the prison lived experience, but to elicit and enlist the audience's sympathy, empathy, and support.

5.1.3 *Metaphors and Similes*

The study showed that the inmate poets heightened the sharing of their prison lived experiences using both metaphors and similes. They used these literary devices to share their worries, troubles and hopes as inmates. In the poem *The Work I Never Knew* the inmate poet used metaphors to show the weight of pain, regret and worries by describing the prison as "An opaque colour not transparent of justice" and "a deep pipe of abyss." He used the same metaphorical power to warn against crime by describing it as "A killer that kills slowly but fatal."

Then, in trying to cope with his prison experience Inmate Serial Number 1182/18 in his poem describes himself as "A President in a Correctional Facility" because he too, as an inmate, is "guarded 24/7." Then he used similes to create a satirical irony between his presidency and the one we know in our daily lives when he says: "But I wonder why am always counted, counted like money is the manner of this presidency."

To convey the difficult experiences of an inmate in the prison, the poem by Inmate Serial Number 202/19 used similes to describe the place as “darkness”. The poem partly read “I presume the prison as the darkness” where “...trouble and worry are part of me, handling them like a hot pan/Tears flowing like a river” because “When eaten, crime is like poison.”

While prison is described as this bad place, Inmate Serial Number 1288/20 in his poem, *A Bitter Prison*, used a simile “as” to inspire hope by likening his story to that of the biblical Samson who found honey in a place that he should otherwise find nothing but rot and excreta:

Out of bad things comes a good thing
Out of bitterness comes something sweet
Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion
That is my story
I found a better future from a bitter prison.

5.1.4 Symbolism and Imagery

All the poems were found to have combined imagery and symbolisms to invoke the senses and imagination of the reader to vicariously experience the lived prison experiences of the inmate poets. For example, Inmate number 1299/20 rhythmically employed imagery and symbolism to share how life is and was before and after believing in Jesus. He described his life as “dark and dull,” his mind to be full of “worries and grief” and his eyes flowing with tears before Jesus came into his life. Then his heart gets filled with hope, joy, love, gentleness and healing, and the flowing tears dry up while the dreary day becomes a new day when Jesus comes into his life.

The poem titled *Buried* used the “grave” and “bell” to combine symbolism and imagery to describe the nature of the prison and his life in prison. The poem projected the prison as a grave in which

his life out of miserable experiences becomes worthless: “Being incarcerated is miserable... /Being a prisoner is life rendered useless.” Then the poem uses the bell to show how his life was subjected to living in space where he had little or no control over when he must do anything but lives under the command correctional officers. The symbol of bell conjures up images of sound and the imagery descriptor of correctional officers as “army green officers flowering my grave” appeals to the sense of sight of the scene in typical Zambian prison when officers man them and change shifts as the poem explains:

I see an army green officer flowering my grave

Always duty focused

And the bell is my duty and my name

The bell is everything in prison

Lock-up come not lock-up

Still my life sees no change,

Their shifts come and go

Their faces change with every shift

But my grave remains the same

Being a prisoner is life rendered useless

The inmate poets managed to pick characters, places, words, actions, and objects as symbols and images to convey their lived experiences before and during incarceration as well as how they visualise their post-prison life.

5.1.5 Anaphora

The study found that three poems employed anaphora, the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences, phrases, or clauses. Through this literary device, the poems that

employed it added emphasis and reinforcement to the meaning of the themes they dealt with. The poem *It is Useless* dealt with the theme of the *Futility of Life and Labour*. The anaphora of the word “Yes” emphasised this idea that:

Yes, it is useless

Yes, this life is useless

Yes, year in year out we toil

Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

The poem title *Buried* used the anaphora of the word “they’re” at the beginning of successive verses in the last stanza to emphasise the theme powerlessness. These repetition emphasises the idea that the inmate was emasculated in the prison and his life meant nothing because it was a system created for the benefit of others. So, the word “their” is repeated to show how the inmate poet separates himself from those he describes as “powerful and strong” and “army green officers.”

Then the poem, *Enlighten Me*, uses the repetition of the word “And” at the beginning of successive last verses to celebrate and emphasise the theme of the impact of religious faith in offender reformation. He conveys the idea that believing in Jesus as an offender has multiplier benefits hence the recurrent use of the word “And” as follows:

Even if my faith is weak

Jesus is the one I should seek...

And hope and joy will fill my heart....

And receive his blessing from above

And my worries care will ease away

As I start my new day

5.1.6 Rhyme and Alliteration

Only two poems utilised rhyme. The first one combined rhyme and alliteration as well as mixed various rhyming schemes. This is the titled *It is Useless*. From the first to the third stanzas the poem employs couplet rhyming scheme (AA) with the first stanza also adding initial or head to end or tail rhyme as well as alliteration in its third verse:

Yes, it is useless
Yes, this life is useless
Yes, year in year out we toil
Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil

Generations come and go
Just like inmates also
Man keeps on committing crime
Mostly in his prime

A fertilized egg we all start life
Yet humanity surges to crime and strife.

In the fourth stanza, this poem combined couplet and triplet rhyme (AAA) schemes and equally added initial or head rhyme from the second to the third verse:

So she got the wish of what she wanted
That she did
That she did fell in love with a wrong man
That she did
A shameful deed

Shameful indeed

Abortion, a crime of passion

That is what he did.

But the poem titled *Enlighten Me* consistently used the couplet rhyming scheme throughout the verses. It is also the only poem that used eye rhyme, visual rhyme or a sight rhyme using the words “dull” and “full” since although they are spelled similarly, they are pronounced differently. In addition, the poem used anaphora at the end of it to create initial or head rhyme and heightened its rhyme and rhythm with alliteration using the letters “g” and “h” as in the following lines:

He will touch me with his gentle and healing hand

And once again life will be great and grand.

The use of rhyme and alliteration gave these poems a beautiful flow with rhythm that facilitated the reader’s recalling of the themes of religious faith in offender reformation and the futility of life and labour that they dealt with.

5.1.7 Proverbs and Adages

Only *Bang Bang*, a poem by Inmate of Serial Number 39/19 employed proverbs and adages derived from his Bemba cultural background to his lived experiences as an inmate relatable and acceptable as a general fact or truth about the life inmates in Zambia. The poem used three of these devices. The first one in Stanza 1 he used it to describes his life in society and family circles as an outcast: “umusuku ubi utukishaimpanga” which means *A single bad Sugar Plum brings ridicule to the whole forest*. The second one is in Stanza 4 which he uses to fully take responsibility of the crime he committed and particularly the pain he made his mother to suffer. With this proverb, he seeks to return to the very genesis and cause of this pain, which is the womb to make amends with his mother:

Mum, it is true I would love to

Re-enter into your fruitful womb to make amends

To stitch those bleeding scars and wounds

To teach the foetus that crime does not pay

“Uwenda mupanga euleta makasa yankalamu”

[*He who walks in the forest is the one who brings the feet of a lion*]

The last adage is in Stanza 6. The inmate poet used it convey his reciprocal relationship with correctional officers which helped to reform and for which that he was grateful: “Uwakwensha ubushiku bamutasha ngabwacha” [*He who has guided you through the night is appreciated at daybreak*].

5.1.8 Onomatopoeia

The study found two poems that used onomatopoeia. The first one was *Bang Bang* that mimicked the actual sounds of an object hitting on another to conjure up images in us of the passing of judgement in a court room: “Bang, Bang, Bang, silence in court/The only sound I heard was of papers.” The inmate poet also used this sound to demonstrate how by committing a crime he crushed with the law and broke down the hearts of his family and mother, an act that led him into prison as he laments in the following lines: “But my delinquency groups plunged me/Into these long high walls/For aggravated robbery murder a heinous offence.”

The second poem that used onomatopoeia was *Buried*. The onomatopoeia was used in the opening verse: “Ha, Ha, Ha, is my cry.” This line mimicked the sound of a laughter which according to the poem is a laughter of mixed feelings because as the verse that follows explain: “Life is bittersweet”.

5.1.9 Oxymoron

Only the poem titled Buried paired opposing or antithetical words to create an impression and enhance the concept or theme the poem was dealing with, that is, the uncertainty of life that leads to powerlessness. These uncertainties according to the poem affect both the powerful and weak and if not handled well, you end up breaking the law and suffer irreparable damage as the persona illustrates:

Ha, Ha, Ha, is my cry
Life is bitter sweet beyond my understanding
Being incarcerated is miserable
I think of how will I bury myself
For I see strong and powerful men
Carrying their coffins in prison
This grave is never satisfied
Where should I go and report my situation

The antithetical words are “Ha, Ha, Ha” which is laughter versus “is my cry” and the word “bitter” and “sweet” in the description of what life is to the inmate.

5.1.10 Epistrophe

Epistrophe also known as epiphora is the retaining of the same word or phrase at the end of successive sentences or clauses. This was found in the poem by Inmate Serial Number 661/13 titled *This Little Life of Mine*. The inmate poet repeated the word “May” and created a regular rhyming as well as couplet rhyming with the word “dismay” in the last verse of the stanza to emphasise the time when he committed a crime that shuttered his life. The epiphora was used as follows:

Of all Mays please May
Never be the 2010 May
My legacy crumbled in that May
As I watched my life in dismay

5.1.12 Apostrophe

Inmate Serial Number 661/13 in his poem *This Little Life of Mine* was found to have also used apostrophe, addressing inanimate and even absent objects and ideas as if they were human beings and present. In the first stanza, he addressed the month of “May” as if it were a person that “please May/Never be the 2010 May”. He also addressed “life” as if it were a person who looks at himself in a mirror or dress and undresses himself. Further, “liberty” and “freedom” were addressed as his beloved companions he longs for: “My liberty thrown away and locked up/Oh, I long to see you again my dear freedom.” Lastly, he presented “immorality” as someone with hands and a mind that dragged him into the underworld:

With a contented mind and good conscience
Overruled by split seconds of immorality
Bagged me into the garbage world, unknown

The use of apostrophe helped the poet emphasise the theme of his crime as to when and how it was committed and the consequences he suffered.

5.1.13 Satire

The study found artful ridicule, and exposure of the failure, of the correctional system in Zambia in the poem, *A President in the Correctional Facility*. The poet used satire to ridicule the prison system and its flaws, discrepancies, and inadequacies as a means of provoking the reader and

challenging its viewpoints throughout the poem. This gave the poem humour and at the same time conveyed meaning to fulfil the purpose of the poem to share the painful lived experiences of incarceration as illustrated in the following lines:

But I wonder why am always counted
Counted like money is the manner of this presidency
They slap my shoulders as they count
My shoulder skin has started itching
From the slaps of different body guards
They count me like am a counterfeit
In here am always a number....

5.1.14 Allusion

The allusions that the study found in the poems were two Biblical ones, that is, an allusion to the story of Samson and the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Without going into any significant details, the poems used words or phrases to make us call to mind these stories in the Bible.

The poem titled *The Devil Appeared* used the following lines to allude to the story of the rich man and Lazarus:

On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus
Pick up my Voice to the people of society

With this allusion the poet showed how he lived an affluent life based on criminal activities and how this led him to suffer in prison in the same way Lazarus suffered on earth and the rich man was tormented in hell. He also showed how he was now a changed man seeking forgiveness and advocating against fraudulent lifestyles:

I realise it isn't too late to turn back in God's hands

Despite being caged with orange jumpers
On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus
Pick up my Voice to the people of society
Tell them crime does not pay; never forget love is the greatest
Love never gives up and do not lose faith.

The poem *A Bitter Prison* used an allusion of the story of Samson in the Bible to describe how Inmate Serial Number 1288/20 had fought his battle against the odds that comes with incarceration to acquire skills while in the correctional facility.

My mind has erected more and more
I have acquired skills and trades
This makes me not to fill the sentence...
Just as Samson found honey in a carcass of a lion
That is my story
I found a better future from a bitter prison.

5.1.15 Pun

The study found pun in one poem. This is a literary device which a poet employed to use words with similar or identical sounds but with different meanings to make the poem witty yet conveying a serious lived experience of both the murder he committed and the prison sentence he was serving. The words he punned were “pen” and “pain” in the first stanza to talk about the fact that the pain he was suffering and was now penning down was because of the crime of murder he committed “The pen behind this sentence is murder, serving my own life.”

5.2 Themes in Prison Poetry of Mwembeshi Maximum Prison.

There are eleven broad categories of themes discernible in the poems written by inmates of Mwembeshi Prison which will be discussed in this chapter: *Childbirth as Punishment, Disillusionment, Dehumanisation and Servitude, Futility of Life and Labour, Prison as the Home of God, Crime and God, Tragic Flaw, Confinement and Rehabilitation, Vice against Virtue, Regret, Powerlessness, and Fear*. These themes address the first objective of this study.

5.2.1 *Childbirth as Punishment*

The function of the theme of childbirth as punishment is quite significant in the sense that it reveals the sentence served in prison as the gestation period when the child develops in his mother's womb, the day of convict as the day of conceiving and the day of birth as the day of discharge. The theme of childbirth as punishment takes the role of educating society on recidivism and reintegration. Recidivism is the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend and while reintegration occurs when the victim or offender can become active and productive parts of their communities, the poem *Bang Bang* through the theme of childbirth assures society that the inmate during his gestation period developed skills and discovered his potential. For example, "This is the darkest episode of my life/ Correctional officers have helped me rediscover my potentiality in life." The persona also attaches a lot of importance on correctional officers as parenting the personal discovery, rehabilitation process and promoting the reduction of recidivism. Through the theme of childbirth as punishment, the persona manages to express his thoughts about his prison lived experience and the role of correctional officers in fostering reintegration and a reduction in recidivism.

Still, when the inmate is discharged just like a child is born and does not portray the qualities parents intended them to have or the expectation of society after discharge, he/she faces rejection. Or even worse, the child is abandoned and like a child abandoned after birth, so are inmates

abandoned by society after discharge. Through the theme of childbirth as punishment, therefore, the persona does not only advocate for a reduction in recidivism, but also advocates for inmate reintegration into society. The poem *Bang Bang* is a plea to society to receive inmates as members of society who can contribute positively to the development of society through their acquired skills in prison.

The inmate's confession of the shame he has brought upon his family and society becomes seriously treated through the theme of childbirth as punishment. The persona seems to advocate for inmates to get fair treatment. For him, the philosophical argument that people are not born evil is true. Instead, it is the caring of these people that determines their behaviour. The persona views incarceration as his salvation and the warden not a military monster, but his helper to his rehabilitation and personal discovery.

5.2.2 Disillusionment

Another significant theme that came out the study is disillusionment punctuated by love, hope and regret. In the *Bang Bang* poem, the persona is disillusioned he realises how peer pressure misled him as shown in the verse: "but my delinquency groups plunged me into these long high walls." The disillusionment is intensified by the consequences he suffers alone and the cost his mother must bear for his delinquency. He is therefore filled with regret and seeks to transform himself and make amend. The motif of regret and remorse followed by the drive to make a difference is recurring in several other poems. For example, in the poem *The Devil Appeared*, the persona takes on the role of warning society that crime does not pay as shown in the verses:

Despite being caged with orange jumpers

On my knees just like a rich man asking for Lazarus

Pick up my Voice to the people of society

Tell them crime does not pay; never forget love is the greatest
Love never gives up and do not lose faith

Also, in the poem *The Work I Never Knew*, the persona searches for ways to end crime and his sentence and equally plays an advocacy role against crime as shown in the following lines:

Crime is the passport entry
A travelling document into these walls
How do I end this?
I ask the preacher man who tells me to repent.

.... Crime does not pay but pains
Hard labour, misery is its fruit
When eaten, crime is like poison
A killer that kills slowly but fatal
Do you admire this world?

5.2.3 Dehumanisation and Servitude

Inmate 1182/18's poem, *A President in a Correctional Facility*, provided an in-depth description of the extent to which dehumanisation and servitude was experienced in correctional facilities in Zambia. This dehumanisation and servitude were a recurring thematic motif in several other poems such as *Buried*, *A Bitter Prison* and *This Little Life of Mine*. The persona in these poems portray the state of an inmate as a slave who is stripped of his humanity and all that remains is number and a dead body in an orange uniform. This is explicitly stated in the poem *Bars* where the person says he is "caged in orange jumpers" and in the poem *A President in a Correctional Facility* argues that

But I wonder why am always counted

Counted like money is the manner of this presidency
They slap my shoulders as they count
My shoulder skin has started itching
From the slaps of different bodyguards
They count me like am a counterfeit
In here am always a number

In the face of this dehumanisation and servitude, the poems bring out different strategies that inmates use to cope with their deplorable conditions in prisons. For example, the very idea of the persona calling himself “A President in a Correctional Facility” is a strategy in which the inmate tries to create a positive self-image by equating his “24/7” security detail to that of the President of the country. Other poems show that inmates turn to religious faith to deal with their reality and the poem *Enlighten Me* best illustrates this in the lines:

Here the day is dark and dull
And my mind is with worries full
I don't give up nor despair
For the one who can help me is very near
Once I have faith and belief
It will ease all my worries and grief
I shouldn't delay turn to Jesus today
I should go on my knees and pray
Jesus will hear my heartfelt cry
And my tears he will dry
He will touch me with his gentle and healing hand

But others totally withdraw and self-isolate themselves as the persona in the poem “Buried” demonstrate

Being incarcerated is miserable
I think of how will I bury myself...
All alone in my bed
Fear touches my skin
My heart struggles against the walls
To be buried is the safety way
But there is no one to bury me
The prison wall is my grave
My life is connected to the dead
And this grave is my home forever.

5.2.4 Futility of Life and Labour

The study established the theme of how life and labour are futile from the poem by inmate 719/19 titled, *it is Useless*. This poem does not just lament about the futility of life and labour but seeks to suggest that incarceration and the rehabilitation programmes in the prisons are dysfunctional, they neither reform the offenders nor deter delinquency in any way. This is concluded in the following verse

Yes, year in year out we toil
Yet nothing to show for from this prison soil
Generations come and go
Just like inmates also
Man keeps on committing crime

Mostly in his prime

That the persona concludes in this manner, he is not remorseful for his crime and does not regret having indecently assaulted the woman whom he believes she deserved whatever he did to her:

So she got the wish of what she wanted

That she did

That she did fell in love with a wrong man

That she did

A shameful deed

Shameful indeed

Abortion, a crime of passion

That's what he did.

The idea that the correctional system is a failed experiment also appears in the poems *Buried*, *A Bitter Prison*, *This Little Life of Mine* that described the correctional facilities as a “grave”, “bad and bitter confined inside,” and “garbage world unknown” respectively.

These poems invited the questioning of the purpose of incarceration and gives light to how incarcerated inmates feel about life in prison and serving a sentence with hard labour.

5.2.6 Crime and God: Prison as a Home of God

Inmate 202/19 described how crime and God are built into the fabric of prison life. This reality is twofold. It can either help to diffuse the daily challenges of incarceration by providing a form of salvation and repentance or lead to disillusionment and questioning if there exists such a thing as a just God. The latter is made worse by that the fact that the idea of God serves as a constant reminder of the crime the inmate committed and that man is incapable of being good because only

God is holy. Given this kind of reflection, the persona describes the preaching about God and repentance as nothing but darkness and that the promise of God having better plans, preparing a home and better future as illusory:

Crime is the passport entry

A travelling document into these walls

How do I end this?

I ask the preacher man who tells me to repent...

The preacher man tells me darkness

Dark moment of its own kind

I presume the prison as the darkness

An opaque colour not transparent of justice

Ahead of me, I see no future

God says "I plan your future"

A thought to give you home

What is this future again?

What home I ask him?

After considering every preaching and Biblical promise, the persona seems to suggest that if God exists, then the promised heaven is the prison itself because he has found that God is acknowledged more in prison. Besides, the salvation he and his family needed and still need is not going to the unknown "heaven" but to be saved from poverty and this situation calls for nobody's help but personal responsibility. This is illustrated in the following verses:

"My son do not despise my chastening

I rebuke those I love” says Lord
Is prison my rebuke? I ask the Lord....
Do you admire this world?
I urge you as the edge of the blade
Crime is sharper and thin food for thought
Endangering everyone who touches it
This world calls for no body
But I forced the blade over a silly mistake

Remorse always comes too late
I was the hope of redemption
To redeem my family from poverty
Today I am in a deep pipe of abyss

As such, in concluding his confession, the persona believes the person he sinned against is not God but society:

Hopeless I stand as a dead shepherd to his sheep
My future glory is shuttered
Shame I disappointment societies code

5.2.7 Tragic Flaw

Tragic flaw is defined here as hamartia which is commonly understood to refer to the protagonist's error or tragic flaw that leads to a chain of actions which culminate in a reversal of events from freedom to imprisonment. In the poem *This Little Life of Mine*, Inmate 661/13 discusses the theme

of tragic flaw, observing his act of committing a crime as a mistake that landed him in prison and at the same time as a lesson to society:

With a contented mind and good conscience
Overruled by split seconds of immorality
Bagged me into the garbage world, unknown

My liberty thrown away and locked up
In this little life of mine
Bearing regret of all regrettable

Oh, I long to see you again my dear freedom.

The study has established that all poems have this recurring motif where the inmate poets see themselves as fallen heroes of their own life. Viewing themselves as heroes'enablesthe inmates to escape and survive feelings of shame and doubt. Suffice to say that as the poems showed, this escape is twofold: either there is an emotional and authentic realisation, overcome with feelings of shame, guilt, and shock and this leads to successful rehabilitation or there is a fake, inauthentic self-constituted for survival and does pose challenges for offender reformation.

5.2.8 Rehabilitation in Confinement

The theme of confinement and rehabilitation is a prevalent and dominant issue in all the poems. As a result, confinement is shown to be effective in restoring retribution and rehabilitation. However, a lack of set rehabilitation programmes and implementation prevents it from successful implementation. In this research, poems reviewed that confinement was not only punitive, but can also be used in the understanding of rehabilitation. The poems also illustrate that confinement could be used as a punitive and rehabilitative approach towards the deterrence of crime. The confinement of inmates is a practical punitive approach; while poetry is employed in the

understanding of the inmates lived experience in the confined prison environment. Some poems like *Bang Bang* exposed the inmates feeling about confinement and rehabilitation; "I see the walls punting at me, correctional officers have helped me rediscover my potentiality in life." The discovering of personnel potential by the inmate demonstrates the symbiosis between confinement and rehabilitation; it is through the person's confinement that he hears the punting walls. This demonstrates confinement as a process of rebuke leading to rehabilitation.

5.2.9 Religious Faith in Offender Reformation

This theme showed how religious faith brings into the correctional setting the much-needed element of hope and motivation to change, and ideas of forgiveness and the love of both the self and others. It reduces the feeling of being isolated from the community. This is because the inmate feels connected to God who is the creator of the universe. This creates a feeling of still being linked with the community and encourages pro-social behaviour development as the inmate learns how to live with the criminal past and desires to create a present and future without crime. This suggests that if inmates are to fully benefit from this religious faith, religious communities must be encouraged to provide a consistent human interaction and communal experience with inmates, so that they are still connected with society. At the same time, the Zambia Correctional Service should have a deliberate policy of tracking religious participation of every inmate and analysing how that participation is related to the respective inmate's infractions in prison and integration in society. This kind of scenario that provides for faith based human interaction and the continuous analysis of the impact of this process is important because it is already established that mere believing and praying without human interaction with the outside world may not be enough to bring about post-release change or development. Even more, understanding the extent to which this faith based human interaction is working helps to inform policy and practice. This does not suggest that

religious faith is a panacea. The poems in this study have simply shown that religious faith can work for some inmates in certain circumstances. One of these circumstances seems to be a certain level of personal commitment to the faith and the practice of it in a communal environment.

It should be noted however that the poems that brought out this theme looked at religious faith from a positive side. And given the lack of studies to establish the extent of the positive impact of religious faith on inmates in Zambia, it would be misleading to generalize the above observation. Undoubtedly, based on the poems analysed, religious faith has an impact on the rehabilitation process for offenders. Future studies may wish to explore and analyse this impact in the Zambian context. The value of this study is that it was able to discern from the poems that religious faith was positively impacting the inmates in a manner that can potentially reduce infractions and recidivism as well as an important variable in a study that is predictive of offender rehabilitation and integration.

5.2.10 Ancestral Moral Authority

The established that the idea of regret and remorse in the poems was anchored in the theme of Ancestral Moral Authority which was particularly brought out more clearly by the poem *The Devil Appeared*. The inmate poet seemed to all look back at their life before incarceration and wished they had listened to the counsel of their parents and elders to avoid bad company as the poem *Bang Banga* ably puts it that: “But my delinquency groups plunged me/Into these long high walls.” It is these delinquent groups that the poem *The Devil Appeared* refers to the devil both in its title and the opening verse that they are deceitful: “Way back, the devil appeared in deceit.”

The inmate poet who wrote *The Devil Appeared* emphasises the idea of the power of ancestral moral authority and the dangers of drifting away from established and accepted manner of conduct

with the allusion to the story of the rich man and Lazarus in the bible. In this story, Abraham is a good example of patriarchy or an ancestor that lived a life that made him a friend with God as he remained faithful to God even in trouble times when he had to give away his own wife to other men. Lazarus followed in the footsteps of this ancestor and ended up in heaven unlike the rich man. The poem concludes by showing that is only by not losing faith in our established order that we can live meaningful lives otherwise we end up in prison “caged with orange jumpers.”

5.2.11 Powerlessness

The inmate poet in the poem *Buried* made the persona epitomise the theme of powerlessness and despair. It is as if the poet once read the words of Gresham Sykes (1958:63) that once wrote to says “Life in the maximum-security prison is depriving or frustrating in the extreme, "and each successive political regime does little to change that reality (Haney, 2002). The poem shows that the pains of imprisonment have deep physical and psychological costs with deadly implications for adjustment and adaptation in prison and in the world beyond prison.

This theme brings a radical twist to the reality of prisons in Zambia painted in the poem before it. It suggests that the lived experiences of confinement do not lead to the much discussed emphasis on rehabilitation as a goal of incarceration. Even the recent changes from prisonisation to correctional ethos has not changed the difficult and problematic realities of inmates which makes it difficult to both live as a prisoner as well as transition as they return to the free world.

5.2.12 Isolation and Fear

The poems show a need for freedom and the experience of a normal life in a human community and the possibility that the reintegration into society is a smooth process that welcomes the inmate as member of society without fear and isolation. This is the theme of isolation and fear that is

present throughout most poems. On the most demonstrative level, we see this isolation and fear when the persona in the poem *The Work I Never Knew* says:

Friends, friends, why me alone
In this prison I see all people
Survival is the grace of God
God is acknowledged more here.

The preacher man tells me darkness
Dark moment of its own kind
I presume the prison as the darkness
An opaque colour not transparent of justice

Ahead of me, I see no future
God says "I plan your future"
A thought to give you home
What is this future again?
What home I ask him?

The hope of the persona dies upon incarceration, he sees no future and he illustrates fear as he sees no future and no home in his post-prison free world. Even more, the presumption of prison as a dark and the darkest environment comes from the need to demonstrate his fear and isolation from the entire world and the loss of reality, the loss of reality is demonstrated by the persona's view of prison as a dark environment as an opaque colour not transparent of justice or a home. The feeling of isolation is illustrated as the inmate separates himself from both his fellow inmates and the world; "Friends, friends, why me alone," this also demonstrates the magnitude of isolation the

inmates' experiences while serving his sentence. Fortunately, each time he asks God of his future, his promised of a home and a future which he negates with the fear he has experienced and the isolation: The theme of fear and isolation are also illustrated in the poem *Bars*:

I have tried to consummate the space between the bars
No pain, the rust between them pricks my life to death
With my teeth am always scratching for freedom on my cell bar
Yet the death inside the bars serves me with a capital punishment
A familiar memory of closed space, friction and pain bursts
She was a little girl in uniform, now am an adult in uniform.

The verse captures the fear and the isolation experienced by the inmate within the prison cells. The fear is anchored on the guilty conscious of the inmate and his isolation from society. The cell bars represent isolation; his need to consummate the spaces between the cell bars is anchored on freedom, the need to break from the isolation. The verse also captures the psychological damage of guilty on the inmate and how it pushes the inmate into a state of fear and isolation.

Therefore, the theme of fear and isolation can be seen as a plea for restorative justice between the offender, victim, and society. To demonstrate the call for restorative justice, most of the poems highlight a guilty persona, who's guilty is replicated into fear and psychological isolation. To combat this fear and isolation, it is important that restorative justice programs are created that will curb the fear and translate into a guilty free inmate who believes in reintegration and who can feel accepted and forgiven by society before discharge. Through such themes, the substance of restorative justice can be pursued with deeper meaning since the poems are expressive of the inmates' fears and prison experiences which can be used to facilitate the process of reintegration.

5.3 Significance and Implications of the Themes and Stylistic Content of the Mwembeshi Maximum Prison Poetry to the Zambia Correctional Service

The significance of the findings of this study relies in the fact that they show the need for a range of structural and programmatic changes in the Zambia Correctional Service for it to fully migrate from punitive system to restorative justice. The study shows that there is need to identify and address the issues that are making lives of inmates deteriorate rather than transform. The correctional facility conditions and practices as well as new programmes are needed as preparation for admission, stay and for release, during transitional periods of parole or initial reintegration to ensure continued successful adjustment.

Further, the study has demonstrated that the arts, and poetry in particular, can be one of the most beneficial treatments in correctional facilities. This is because by recording the lived experiences of inmates including the psychological state of inmates, poetry can help foster an understanding as well as equip inmates, correctional officers, social workers, health care providers, educators and parents or guardians with tools of how they can create strategies of helping inmates transform and how inmates can be integrated into society after release without a preconceived approach to the individual self that committed the crime.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter has discussed the findings of the analyses of the poems in relation to the initial objectives and purpose of the study. It has explained the themes in the selected ten poems by inmates and how they did not just bring out the prison lived experiences of the inmates but had implications for the policy, programmes, and practice of the Zambia Correctional Service. Finally, it has demonstrated that these themes were only able to be effectively communicated in the manner they were because the inmate poets ably employed literary devices in their writing.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

6.0 Introduction

This inquiry analysed the stylistic and thematic characteristics of selected poems written by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility and their relationship to, particularly how they socially constructed, the prison experience in Zambia. The study looked at the stylistic content of and, emergent themes in, poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service and how these reflected the inmate's prison experience. The study further looked at the significance of this stylistic content and themes in relation to the prison experience in the Zambia Correctional Service. As such, the study had three objectives: (i) To investigate the stylistic content of selected poems by inmates at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility; (ii) To explore the emergent themes in the selected poems; and (ii) To examine the significance of the themes and stylistic content of the selected poems in relation to the prison experience under the Zambia Correctional Service. The following sections give summary findings under each objective.

6.1 Objective 1

The first objective established the stylistic content in the poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service. It investigated how the resources of a language code were used in the production of the actual messages in the poems (Shibu, 2006). By doing this, the study demonstrated how poems were a discourse, a communicative discourse, by inmates to share their prison experiences. The study showed that the inmates in their use of language patterns in their poems, they created a form of communication using seventeen literary devices namely: free verse, parallelism, repetition, metaphors, similes, symbolism, imagery, anaphora, rhyme, alliteration,

proverbs, adage, parables, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, epistrophe, apostrophe, satire, allusion, and pun. Each of these literary devices that constituted the stylistic content of the poems was used to bring out the themes that were discussed under objective 2. It was also shown that at the morphological level, the poems employed word forms such as proverbs and adages for the purposes of condemning certain behaviours, additionally, that the poems further employed repetition for effective communication.

It was also determined that the figures of speech employed at the stylistic level were used to create new meanings and reflected both the inmates prison lived experience and the inmate's psychological state. That, for instance, through suggestion of common qualities or relationships between two things, metaphors were used to enhance perception of ideas and to add variety to the language used. The imagery was used to create mental pictures that facilitate delivery, reception and recollection of ideas. Symbolism was used for euphemistic purposes as well as efficient delivery of messages realised through the imagery enacted in its use. Similes effected direct comparison and enhanced understanding whereas personification was used to bring abstract ideas to life thereby aiding understanding of the prison lived experience. Furthermore, the free verse was used to aid the freedom of expression to both the inmate and poem. Satire was used to ridicule the prison system and its flaws, discrepancies, and inadequacies as a means of provoking the reader and challenging its viewpoints throughout the different poems. The study found artful ridicule, and exposure of the failures, of the correctional system in Zambia in such poems as *A President in the Correctional Facility* and *Bang Bang*.

It important to note in conclusion that all the poems used free verse apart from one poem. This showed that the inmates shared their lived experiences as stories in order to make them easily relatable to the reader. It also showed their orature cultural background, limited vocabulary and

exposure to poetic writing and training. Only eight of the studied poems used parallelism and repetition. This device showed how the inmates endeavoured to re-enforce and re-emphasise their lived experiences to their audience and invoke sympathy, empathy and support.

The metaphors and similes were used by only three poems: *The Work I Never Knew*; *A President in a Correctional Facility*; and *A Bitter Prison* to create a satirical irony to critiquing the correctional system and society as well as convey the difficult experiences of an inmate in the correctional facility. The irony was how society assumes to cultivate good behaviour using bad places that prisons are. Nonetheless, the poems still expressed hope that just like the biblical Samson found “honey from a carcass of a lion”, the inmates would find “a better future from a bitter prison”. The metaphors and similes were punctuated by symbolisms and imagery to invoke the senses and imagination of the audience to vicariously experience the lived prison experiences of the inmate poets. This was ably achieved by picking characters, places, words, actions, and objects as symbols and images to convey their lived experiences before and during incarceration as well as how they visualise their post-prison life.

Three poems used anaphora, namely *It is Useless*, *Buried* and *Enlighten Me*. This literary device helped these three poems to emphasise and reinforce the meaning of the recurring themes particularly the theme of *Futility of Life and Labour* and *Religious Faith in Offender Reformation*.

Rhyme and alliteration were only found in two poems: *It is Useless* and *Enlighten Me*. This is also true for onomatopoeia and allusion which were found in only two poems each. Onomatopoeia was in *Bang Bang* and *Buried* while allusion of the biblical stories of Samson and the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus was found in *A Bitter Prison* and *The Devil Appeared* respectively. The use of these devices gave these poems a beautiful flow which also reinforced the cited recurring themes.

Further, the devices revealed that the inmate poets who used them, had practiced writing poems before participating in the creative writing training workshop during which the studied poems were generated.

The following literary devices were rarely found but only in one poem each: proverbs and adages, oxymoron, epistrophe, apostrophe, satire and pun. Proverbs and adages were found in the *Bang Bang* poem. The proverbs and adages were derived from the Bemba language and the poet used them to make his lived experiences relatable and acceptable as a general fact or truth about the life of inmates in Zambia. Oxymoron was in the poem, *Buried*, and was used to enhance concept of the uncertainty of life during and after incarceration as an underlying cause of the powerlessness that characterise inmates.

Epistrophe or epiphora was found in the poem *This Little Life of Mine*. The word “may” was retained at the end of successive verses of the poem to a regular rhyming. This poem was also the only one that used apostrophe where inanimate and even absent objects and ideas particularly the month of May, liberty, freedom, immorality and life were addressed as human beings present. This emphasised the theme of the inmate’s crime as to when and how it was committed and the consequences he suffered.

The poem, *A President in the Correctional Facility*, is the only one that used satire and particularly to creatively ridicule, and expose the failure, of the correctional system in Zambia. Relating to satire was the use of pun in the poem titled, *Bars*. In punning the words pen and pain, the poet did not just use these identical sounding words with different meanings to make the poem witty but to convey a serious lived experience of both the murder he committed and his prison experience was as terrible as the pain he suffered his victims.

6.2 Objective 2

The second objective explored the emergent themes in poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service and how they reflected their prison experience. The question that was asked to achieve this objective was: How did the emergent themes in poems written by inmates in the Zambia Correctional Service reflect the inmate's prison experience? There were four recurring themes namely: *Rehabilitation in Confinement*, *Religious Faith in Offender Reformation*, *Regret*, *Powerlessness*, and *Fear*. These themes were found in all the poems. Then, the following themes were only found in respective poems: *Childbirth as Punishment* (Bang Bang), *Disillusionment* (The Work I Never Knew; and Bang Bang), *Dehumanisation and Servitude* (A President in a Correctional Facility; Buried; A Bitter Prison; Enlighten Me; and This Little Life of Mine), *Futility of Life and Labour* (It is Useless; Buried; A Bitter Prison; and This Little Life of Mine), *Crime and God: Prison as the Home of God* (The Work I Never Knew), *Tragic Flaw* (This Little Life of Mine), *Ancestral Moral Authority* (The Devil Appeared).

The recurring themes demonstrated the general atmosphere that characterise the correctional facility of Mwembeshi. The theme of *Religious Faith in Offender Reformation* showed how the chaplaincy of the Zambia Correctional Services and other religious organisations that evangelise in prisons have through their religious activities provided hope and motivation in the inmates to change, and seek forgiveness and the love from God. This kind of hope is essential for post-release change or development for inmates. The theme of powerlessness shows how vulnerable the inmates feel and this feeling is both physical and psychological. If harnessed well, it is a requisite for adjustments and adaptation both in prison and beyond. This is especially true when linked to the final recurring theme of isolation and fear that shows the need in the inmate of freedom and the experience of a normal life in a human community. The poems show the fear in inmates about

whether or not they would reintegrate back in society or upon their release they would still live in isolation because of stigma against them.

The different poems found in different themes reinforced the underlying messages in these recurring themes. They admonished crime and warned society of its consequences. For example, the theme of childbirth as punishment in the *Bang Bang* poem shows how the inmate wishes to amend his misdeeds against his mother who symbolises both his biological mother and society as his motherland. This theme reinforces the concept of forgiveness embedded in the recurring theme of *Religious Faith in Offender Reformation*. This recurring theme is also reinforced by the theme of *Crime and God: Prison as a Home of God*. Then, the theme of *Futility of life and labour* reinforces the recurring theme of *Isolation and Fear* just like the theme of *Ancestral Moral Authority* emphasises the recurring theme of *Rehabilitation in Confinement*.

Through the theme of regret, the inmates advocated for adherence to the rule of law and communicated messages which mentor society to refrain from harmful behaviours that make people become social misfits. Then the theme of *Crime and God: Prison as a Home of God* implored the Zambia Correctional Service to establish how they can diffuse the daily challenges of incarceration to provide a better environment that leads to repentance and salvation through the Christian framework of God. The idea of God serves as a constant reminder of the crime the inmate committed and that man is incapable of being perfect because only God is holy. Given this kind of reflection, the poems encourage proper conduct and condemn bad practices that are detrimental to religious morals and general cultural moral standards.

Apart from the themes reflecting the prison lived experience, there is a reflection of life after prison. The poem titled '*The Work I Never Knew*' for example, explore the theme of Isolation and

Fear in a post-prison era. Under this theme, the poem captures the fear and the isolation experienced by the inmate within the prison cells and which fear and isolation continues even after being released thereby tempting the inmate to recede to crime and return to prison.

6.3 Objective 3

The last objective of the study was to examine the significance of the themes and stylistic content of the selected poems in relation to the prison experience under the Zambia Correctional Service. It is clear from the discussion of the findings of this study that there is need for the Zambia Correctional Service to make structural and programmatic changes for it to fully migrate from punitive system to restorative justice. These changes should focus on addressing issues deteriorate the lifestyles of inmates in prison. Further, the transitional periods of parole or initial reintegration in society should be prioritised to avoid recidivism. Further, the study showed that poetry is beneficial not just for making visible the voices of inmates but as a therapy for mindset change and behavioural transformation.

6.4 Conclusion and Suggested Areas for further Study

Generally, all the poems exhibited the use of stylistic and thematic approach. Apart from one poem, all the poems were written in free verse. It can be concluded that literary devices were used to give the poems beauty and form. Further, they emphasised and reinforced the themes which were used as a medium of disseminating the inmates' prison lived experiences, the prison conditions and the inmates psychological state including hope and fear of post-prison life. Furthermore, the reinforcement and emphasis showed how these themes have practical implications for the policy, programmes and practice of the Zambia Correctional Service. The implications were predominantly bent on how to transform the system into a correctional away for the current punitive system still in practice.

The literary devices employed played both an artistic and functional purpose. For functional purposes, they revealed the prison living conditions, the inmate's prison experience and the inmate's psychological attitudes towards rehabilitation and discharge. The shared artistic approach between style and theme played an important role in the reader's insight of the poems. This means that the style in which the lexical items have been used helps in the understanding of the poems' themes hence aiding the reader's experience of the poet's prison lived experience.

6.4 .1 Suggested Areas for further Study

To further enrich existing knowledge on stylistic and thematic analysis of Zambian prison poetry, there is need to:

1. Conduct stylistic and thematic study of Zambian prison poetry across all the prison facilities of the Zambia Correctional Services.
2. Establish how the Zambia Correctional Service can utilise information about the lived experiences of inmates captured through poetry to equip inmates, correctional officers, social workers, health care providers, educators and parents or guardians with tools of how they can create strategies of helping inmates rehabilitate and how inmates can be integrated into society after release without a preconceived approach to the individual self that committed the crime.
3. Explore the effects of poetry writing and performance as a therapy with inmate artists in Zambia; and
4. Investigate the relationship between poetry and self-discovery dialoguing toward transformation with inmates in Zambia.

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