

# Epistolary Mourning and the Repressed Unconscious: A Postcolonial Analysis of Selected Songs by Lucius Banda and Mlaka Maliro

Atanzio Ernest Kamwamba, Samson Apatsa Banda

Nkhoma University, Malawi

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.806186>

Received: 31 May 2024; Accepted: 13 June 2024; Published: 18 July 2024

## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to analyse selected songs from Malawi; specifically those done by two artists, Lucius Banda and Mlaka Maliro. Specifically, the study focused on those songs which are in form of epistles. The study analysed the songs using Postcolonial lens, viewing the songs as tools which the artists used to voice out their concerns on the socio-political challenges facing the postcolonial Malawian society. Using Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, this paper argues that the two artists voice out their repressed desires as they mourn the decay in society caused by the powers that be. The study observes that the two artists use the epistolary form to enable them disguise their message and these songs represent their unconscious minds. It is against this observation, therefore, that the study argues that these songs are a leakage of the unconscious minds of the artists into consciousness, and are, therefore, powerful tools for political and governance criticism.

**Keywords:** epistles, mourning, disillusionment, politicians

## INTRODUCTION

There are many forms of art that have had impact on social wellbeing, economy, revolutionaries and political will of the people in different societies. Art is an expression of people's inner thoughts, feelings and experiences. It is also an expression of creativity that can be used for self-reflection or social influence (Perry, 2022). There has been a lot of impact brought in the world by the use of art of different forms, so much so that it has been accepted across the world that art is more than what meets the eye; there is so much that people can learn from different forms of art. As Morrissey and Sherman (2017) observe, art is not only valued for its beauty, but also for its social and epistemic importance; that is, for its communicative nature, its capacity to increase one's self-knowledge and encourage personal growth, and its ability to challenge our schemas and preconceptions.

This study looked at epistolary nous and usage of Malawian selected songs with a focus on Lucius Banda's and Mlaka Maliro's songs in addressing critical issues that affect people's lives. These songs have an element of mourning, which is presented in form of letters by someone from the motherland carrying a paternal voice.

According to Mitchell (2016), artists have a love of exploring different genres of their art and they usually use these different art forms to tackle various issues of national or personal concern. Similarly, Andrews (2015) observes that through their knowledge over matters in their countries, society or their immediate ambience, artists are able to come up with relevant products from their art that people can easily relate to,

including the use of epistles. It is in epistles, presented as songs, that Lucius Banda and Mlaka Maliro address a wide range of issues with a portrayal of mourning and ambivalent paternal voice. The study explores epistolary songs by Lucius Banda, namely; “Kuno Zavuta”, a 1997 song from the album *Take Over*, “Zavutabe”, a 2007 release from the album, *Yahwe*, “Kalata Yachitatu” from the 2013 album *Enemy*, “Kalata Yachinayi” from the 2017 album *Crimes*, “Kalata Yachisanu” from the 2022 album *Love and Hate*; and lastly Mlaka Maliro’s 2013 hit, “Bweraniko”. It is observed that in these songs the artists explore such societal issues as death, hunger, corruption and misuse of public funds, power dynamics and the struggle of political leaders, HIV/AIDS, economic struggles and disillusionment. The study brings to light diverse emotions that come into play in an event of mourning for lost loved ones, and how that becomes figurative and relevant to the mourning in these songs.

## EPISTOLARY MOURNING: UNMASKING THE POLITICAL VOICE IN THE SONGS

According to Williams (2021), epistles, or letters can be taken to a different podium and be used as a powerful tool in addressing many issues affecting human beings, including death. In the song “Kuno Zavuta”, Lucius Banda begins by writing to his uncle in diaspora about people who have passed on in his absence. He writes (sings):

*Okonedwa malume, papita nthawi tisanaonane kunyumba kuno zinthu zafika poyipa, abale ambiri omwe mudawasiya adamwalira, amzanu enanso mudawasiya leronso kulibe* (Dear Uncle, it has been too long you traveled, back home things haven’t been all good, many relatives and friends you left behind are no longer with us, they died).

In the song, Lucius Banda clearly brings out the communicative value of an epistle by addressing a concept of mourning. He realizes that, the uncle, away from home, has not yet heard of events back home; so, it felt important to let him know of the death of his loved ones so they could mourn and find peace over their passing on. What is important in this song is the idea that the artist wants to let the uncle know that the community he left is in a sad state; people are suffering. The song clearly states that the HIV pandemic is killing people at a high speed. It should be noted, however, that the uncle mentioned in this song is not actually a relation to the persona in the song, rather a political leader such as a Member of Parliament or president. The song, therefore, tries to bring to the attention of the political leaders that their people are dying in the village.

In the second song, “Kalata Yachiwiri”, popularly known as “Zavutabe”, Lucius Banda provides a response to the first letter, “Kuno Zavuta”. This response is coming from the uncle, who has come to see for himself; only to find that the damage is worse than he imagined. In mourning, he highlights that on his return to the village to see for himself what has been going on in his absence and to pay his respects to the departed souls, he realizes that there are only a few of the people he knew still around. As he mourns, the chorus of the song then gives the reality of what the situation is really like since he left. The chorus goes:

*Imfa yavuta malume, izo ndi chabe muyende mmudzimu, anthu mulibe malume, kukhala ngati anasamuka, maliro sazoloweka koma ifeyo tazolowera, kusiyana zaka ziwiri, mkadzapezana muthokoze Mulungu.* (Death has hit us hard, if you walk in the village, you will only find shadows, it’s like the people went away on transfers, we are now used to people dying, and it is such a precious thing to meet one another after parting for two years).

Perhaps one observes the gravity of the problem here. It is an important thing that the uncle (politician) decides to go to the village to see for himself. Most often politicians tend to shun the poor masses who vote them into power. They do not have time to visit them and appreciate the challenges they face. The song here

emphasizes the importance of such visits by, say, members of parliament to their constituencies, so as to have the true pictures of challenges people are facing. According to Limbong (2008), epistolary writing is also used to talk of issues that reflect on the meaning of life and death. Death often prompts deep existential questions about the purpose of life and what happens after we die. The epistles are used to explore these questions and share one's own thoughts and reflections on what gives life meaning and purpose.

In his "Kalata Yachitatu", Lucius Banda ropes in Thomas Chibade, now deceased, who, in his thread has had his own songs of lengthy discussions on death. In this song, the duo reflect on the year 2005, which in their mourning, is described as the worst the country has had as very prominent people died. Faith leaders such as Andrea Pacific, Bishop Nyanja; politicians such as Dumbo Lemani and Rodwell Munyenembe; artists such as Vic Marley and close allies passed on to their dismay. Lucius Banda writes to his uncle in this song saying if he had a chance, he would have chosen other individuals to die in place of these people.

In this song, Lucius Banda touches on a number of issues. By suggesting that given a chance to choose who to die, the artist shows there are certain people, especially politicians, he feels are not productive enough and regrets the death of the productive and helpful citizens who passed on. He talks about hunger which has hit the people very hard. It should be noted that the hunger issue was also echoed in "Kuno Zavuta" in which the persona was saying people are finding food at funeral ceremonies, minus which they would be going without food. As Fine (2016) notes, music has the power to convey a range of emotions, including the somber and reflective feelings associated with mourning over hunger. Songs addressing social issues and hardships serve as powerful expressions of empathy and awareness. Numerous African songs touch upon the theme of hunger, expressing the struggles and challenges faced by communities. Artists like Youssou N'Dour, Mirriam Makeba and Fela Kuti have created music that addresses social issues, including hunger and poverty, providing a platform to raise awareness and evoke a sense of solidarity. In the song, "Kuno Zavuta", Lucius Banda bemoans to his uncle how hunger has hit the country hard.

*Kuno ndiye njala yafika powawa, kulima tinalima feteleza ndiye anadula, kwa amzathu opata anabayila ndithu iwo anatola, kunena za mvula inagwa bwino zangotivuta.* (Hunger is hitting us hard, we are struggling to buy farm inputs, while the rich are affording everything, probably they will harvest as they had everything available).

Here the persona is telling politicians to consider subsidizing fertilizer prices so that the poor can afford farm inputs in order to alleviate poverty and hunger. The song captures the vivid cry of the poor amidst the prosperity of the rich in the society, reflecting a poignant social commentary. The epistle's composition addresses the disparity of the marginalized communities, fostering awareness and sparking conversations about social injustice. The mentioning of eating at funerals serves various cultural and psychological purposes. As Mary (2019) notes, in many cultures, sharing a meal during funeral gatherings is a symbolic gesture of comfort, community support, and solidarity. It can provide a sense of normalcy and routine during a challenging time, offering a practical way to address immediate physical needs like hunger, while fostering a communal atmosphere that aids in emotional healing. Additionally, the act of eating may serve as a distraction or coping mechanism for individuals experiencing grief.

The song, "Zavutabe" reveals itself that it is political when the persona appreciates the impact made by the starter pack initiative, which the UDF (United Democratic Front) government initiated. The persona says:

*Vuto lanjala lacheperako, anatitchova ka sitata paki, ngakhale kanali kochepe koma ambiri anakolola.* (The hunger problem has been minimized due to the starter pack initiative).

This, in a lot of sense, would presume a sense of joy but in pseudo terms, it is still a cry of how the poor are only able to sustain themselves due to what they receive on hand to mouth, but a more sustainable solution is what they would need. Crafting epistles with a touch of ambivalence is a class that Lucius Banda has

mastered; this is used as a powerful literary technique to address hunger in the context of messages to the uncle in diaspora. By blending conflicting emotions, the song evokes complex understanding of the challenges faced, fostering empathy and encouraging action to alleviate hunger in their places of origin and, at the same time, calling out the government of the day to address the issues on the ground.

Lucius Banda sings in “Kalata Yachisanu” about such sentiments, carrying a voice of the masses, and, on their behalf, takes in a loud wail over the issues of hunger and this is evident in the emotionally wrecked tone of his voice below:

*Anandituma anthu akumudzi, akulira njala yavuta, moti panopa akangotha mangowa kuli nkondo* (the people back home have sent me to report of the massive hunger they are facing and once the mango season is over, there will be no hope for them).

He reiterates the need that the cries of the people should be heard by the top men in government, which heightens the ambivalence sentiment to a great detail.

Similar sentiments are shared again by Mlaka Maliro in his epistolary representation “Bweraniko”, where he writes to his in-law in diaspora to come home to see his kinsmen. In addressing the issue of hunger, he sings:

*Tisatope ndi kupempha Mulamu chaka chino njala itivuta, feteleza adativuta amzathu adabayila ayi akutola* (We should not stop begging you to help us with the looming hunger, we had no funds to buy fertilizer for our farms; those who applied fertilizer will have bumper harvest).

In this song, the persona is emphasizing the fact that perhaps the in-law in diaspora has forgotten his people back home. The people are hunger stricken, and the persona looks up to the in-law (politician) to bail them out.

The two musicians also explore the issue of corruption and misuse of public funds as a ‘norm’ that is cancerous in many African countries, including Malawi. Dealing with corruption entails also dealing with political leaders, whether within the government administration or in the wider society. According to Torrey (2020), the issue of maintaining public trust is usually hugely linked to how the problem is addressed. Musicians have often used their art to address corruption issues for ages. In their epistles, they decry corrupt practices, shed light on social injustices, and call for change. These musical messages serve as a form of protest, raising awareness and prompting reflection on issues of corruption within society. As observed by Chirwa (1998), artists leverage their platform to advocate for transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior, using the power of music to inspire collective action against corruption. This is the notable angle in the songs under study from Lucius Banda. In his state of writing to his uncle in “Zavutabe”, he mourns over the stealing of public funds as he sings:

*Vuto latsala ndi la umbava, akuti forgery ya ma cheque, galimoto zikungobedwa, banja lathunthu kuphedwa ndi mfuti.* (The only problems still affecting us is the stealing of public funds through forgery, cars keep on being stolen and families are dying at gun point to silence them).

Here, the persona talks about some scrupulous dealings that are affecting the poor, but the privileged are benefiting. A trend in many public offices by the top bosses is the corrupt benchmark which only serves the interests of a very few people, a habit which is killing the hopes of the people as only notable individuals are getting a share from the large cake of public funds. It should be emphasized that this kind of mourning is a leakage of the unconscious mind as stressed by Sigmund Freud in his Psychoanalysis. One would not say this in the face of the politicians; Lucius Banda hides behind the song to tackle such a delicate issue.

On a positive note, Mlaka Maliro lauds efforts by the Bingu wa Mutharika administration to fight corruption

in his “Bweraniko” number. Maliro sings:

*Katangale anachepa boma likuyesetsa DPP wavuta, nawonso abwana pachizungu akuti zero tolerance, zosowa zimenezi, mphamvu lero zili mu anthu, adyera akuoneka, lero kuno mawa uko* (Corruption is now being minimised as the director of public prosecutions is putting a gallant fight on it, and the president has ordered a zero tolerance fight on the same, quiet a rare case in Malawi, and through the same the greedy ones keep jumping from one ship to the other).

The epistle encourages the system to keep on with the fight against corruption. It is no longer about the artist telling his in-law abroad about what is going on back home, rather stressing the need to fight corruption. This is a prodigious attempt to make a greater call that since the fight has started then it should not end without meaningful victories.

In the epistles, Lucius Banda also touches on the power dynamics in political parties. King (2020) stipulates that problems in power dynamics can arise when power is unequally distributed or when it is used in ways that harm others. In addressing the struggles of political leaders through ambivalent paternal voice in epistles, one can adopt a tone that combines support and constructive criticism. This approach involves acknowledging challenges while offering guidance, emphasizing the importance of responsibility, and fostering a sense of accountability for the common good. The ambivalence in the tone allows for a nuanced and balanced communication style, aiming to motivate and guide political leaders through their difficulties.

“Kalata Yachisanu” is the last of the exchange of the epistolary correspondence of an uncle and his nephew as in the words of Lucius Banda. In the first verse, he writes to his uncle with a very somber tone as regards to events in the political leadership spectrum:

*Okonedwa malume anga, papita nthawi chilembeleni kalata yoti mudziwe kumudzi kuli bwanji, kumudzi ndi mavuto, ulendo uja wa ku kenani tafikako tili ndi moyo koma tapeza omwe analipowo a mitima yoyipa, iwo posamuka adatchera mabomba, nthaka ija adayigugitsa, mitengo ija adaduladula, nyumba zonse adagwetsa* (Dear uncle, it has been long since I wrote to tell you how things are back home, unfortunately things are not good here, our journey to Canaan was safe and sound but we found that those we succeeded were wicked as they left the place in ruins).

In this part of the song, Lucius Banda is communicating to his uncle of how chaotic and conflicting the transition was. Canaan here is a reference to the Biblical Promised Land, which was used by the current regime in their campaign promises. Politicians often attract voters by making promises that resonate with popular concerns or aspirations. The use of terms such as *anatchera mabomba*, *mitengo yonse adaduladula* and *nyumba zonse adagwetsa* symbolizes how the outgoing ruling party left a ticking-bomb for the newly elected one and that with every careless move the new government and their promises would explode into smoke, choking the hopes of the people to death.

Borrowing the words of Eesuola (2015), the struggle of political leaders for years has been a key element in epistolary writing. Political leaders often face many challenges and struggles during their time in office. Some of these struggles, for example, include public scrutiny. Political leaders are often under constant public scrutiny and criticism, and must maintain a good public image and reputation. They also face the struggle in balancing competing interests. Political leaders must balance the interests of different groups, such as different economic, social, or ideological groups, and try to make decisions that satisfy as many of them as possible. In the same thought, managing crises is also synonymous with political struggles. Political leaders must be able to manage crises, such as natural disasters, hunger, or economic downturns, and make quick decisions under pressure.

In the same song, “Kalata Yachisanu”, Lucius Banda writes to his uncle that the newly elected government

is making efforts to clear off the deadwood left by the previous regime. Still embracing the mourning emblem, he cries foul that the efforts to make the country better are being hampered by some inside people working as enemies of change and progress. He sings:

*Tsono tayamba kubwezeletsa zinthu, koma malume si ntchito yompweka, nafenso pofika ku Kenani tidabwera ndi atimkenawo, atimkenawo ativuta kwambiri, ife kumanga iwo kumagumula mokuti lero tsiku ndi tsiku tikungomva kwina kwabedwa.* (The new regime realizes that there is a need to start from a scratch but their rebuilding of infrastructure and people's trust is being toyed away by some people who are using thievery schemes to paint a bad picture on the government of the day).

Opposition from political rivals is so much a problem all over the globe. Political leaders often face opposition from political rivals who may try to undermine their authority or block their policies. Here, the opposition is highlighted in most subtle ways but it is clearly one of such elements that the epistle is highlighting. The artist uses the emotions of despair and worry to make his mourning visible even to the listeners who relate well as the events being spoken about are there for the masses to witness.

On HIV/AIDS, Lucius Banda uses “Kuno Zavuta” to mourn how AIDS has dangerously played a role in sending many to the grave. In his tone, he shows an element of surprise as perhaps the people had heard of AIDS but did not realize how deadly it was. In his mourning he writes to his uncle:

*Malume kuno zinthu zavuta, matenda aja ndi oipa, makasu akuthera kumanda, tsiku ndi tsiku kulira maliro.* (Uncle, life here is hard, the deadly disease is killing us rapidly and we are spending much of our time burying the dead)

These lines mean to highlight how the disease has sent undertakers to duties almost on daily basis as the people dying of the disease are many. The idea of daily burials may not have been exact but surely was meant to put an emphasis on the frequency of the people dying. Surely, this would have called for a mourning, no wonder in this epistle of many issues, this was one of the issues addressed. AIDS remains a major public health challenge, with significant social, economic, and health consequences. Addressing these problems requires a multi-faceted approach that includes education, prevention, treatment, and addressing the underlying social determinants of health. Music on a larger scale is also a form of art that is ably used to disseminate information to the masses of how to prevent and reduce the impact of the disease.

On economic struggles, Lucius Banda uses “Kalata Yachitatu” to inform his uncle about the economic challenges facing people in Malawi. The song is a 2013 release and, in this era, the country was facing harsh economy realities that he had to let his pen out and, in collaboration with the late Thomas Chibade, use this epistle to mourn the economic struggles the people were facing. His partner in mourning cuts deep in the struggle rant in the second verse where he sings:

*Kuno maluzi avuta zedi, kuchita kumvetsa chisoni, takayende mtauni Monday kukhala ngati ndi Sunday, anthu ogula kusowa poti ndalama yasowa, zoti ati ndi seasom nthawi yogulitsa fodya, mpamba olimira fodya tikagulitsa sukutuluka.* (People are broke and miserable, a walk in town, everyday feels like Sunday, and no customers in town. It's not like this is a season when farmers sell their tobacco).

The mourning in these lines highlights how desperation has crept in the country as businesses are crumbling slowly and people from all walks of life have no guarantee of stability in their quest for financial freedom. To make matters worse, the cry is much louder because in the season of selling tobacco, the main cash crop in the country, there is still no stable cash flow in the country, casting even a darker shadow on the masses. The song further goes like:

*Mu hyper, mu shoprite akulowa mo ochepa, lunch hour ikudutsa popanda okudya ku hotel, takaonani ku bank, mizere ija inatha, ogulitsa magalimoto ayambano kukwera okha, zavuta owumba njerwa palibe*

*akumanga nyumba*. (Only a few people are frequenting the big shops, no one eats in hotels anymore during lunch hour breaks, queues in banks have become shorter, and car dealers have now started taking rides in their own business cars).

Unlike in the other songs where criticism was veiled, in this song the persona goes straight to the point. The message of mourning over a lot of hardships climaxes here, as the epistle takes into detail how everything else seems to be going down as regards the economy tilt in the country. Many people who were once fond of luxurious lives have humbled themselves as evidenced by activities of less spending. This may seem as a norm but in reference to times of plenty, this is a clear sign of how many people are at the economic downturn and many are reeling and falling as it is clear to them that the struggle to turn this around will not be swift, causing more mourning. According to Tostensen (2017), economic hardships lead to job losses, reduced income, and increased living costs, impacting the masses' ability to meet basic needs and causing financial stress. Social safety nets and effective economic policies are crucial to mitigate these challenges. This is an angle of a father figure calling out the authorities and making them aware of what exactly people are facing on daily basis. It should be mentioned here that the persona blames the economic hardships on the political leadership. This is evident in the verse below:

*Yapita kuti fifite tinkalandira kumsonkhano, mwachotsa mwati nzoypa, mwasinthanitsa ndi chani? Mwana ukamulanda mpeni umupatseko chidole* (Where has the K50 we were receiving at mass rallies gone? When you snatch a knife from a child you give them a doll).

The persona mourns that the immediate past president used to give people cash at mass rallies, which could help them cushion the economic hardships, a thing which the current leadership has removed, saying it is a bad practice.

“Kalata Yachinayi” also tackles issues of economic challenges. The pain of economic downfall is being discussed too as the extremity of the condition seems not to bother the technocrats of the economy in the government to undertake and put in place measures to lessen the impact by improving the livelihood of the people. The pain of people failing to afford the least basic daily needs is a sign of how deep the problem has dug into the economy of the country. During periods of economic distress, a country is characterized by social chaos, unrests bankruptcies and breakdown of law and order (Ransom, 2015). The epistle goes to a sweet melody of instruments and Lucius Banda sings:

*Chabwino ndi chani lero ngakhale pa dzira ayikaponso msonkho, malipiro a ntchito akali pomwe paja, zinthu zakwera, sukulu fees, chakudya feteleza, malo omanga nyumba sikudula kwakeko, akugula akunja, dziko la mtundu wanji lokomera ma foreigner, tikugulitsa dzikoli*. (Nothing is good here as taxes are being charged on even meagre items, basic salaries remain the same, exorbitant prices are coming to the fold for every item on sale, plots are becoming expensive only being available to rich foreigners, the feeling is, the country is being sold out to foreigners as they are ones enjoying life).

The somber narrative of these sentiments reflects the daily life of the people of the land. Indeed, the weight of taxes and the relentless rise in the cost of living cast a mournful shadow. The financial strains mentioned in the song push a peculiar melancholy melody of economic hardship, passing through the corridors of the countrymen. The feeling it brings about is that the people's vibrancy has waned, suffocated by the heavy burden they bear as everything seems too high for ordinary men and women to buy.

The epistle conjures quiet moments of reflection; there is a collective yearning for relief, a desire for a better coming together of fiscal policies and affordability. The mourning in Lucius Banda's voice as he writes to his uncle is not for personal wallets but for the shared struggle of a community navigating the labyrinth of economic challenges. This shared lament stands as a catalyst for a change, inspiring a collective call for more equitable, compassionate, and sustainable economic landscape; a margin of ambivalence in great

lengths.

The epistles (songs) finally touch on disillusionment. Popova (2014) defines disillusionment as the feeling of disappointment or disenchantment that arises when one's beliefs, expectations or ideals are shattered, often due to a realization that something is not as good as previously thought. It involves a loss of faith or trust in a person, idea, institution, or situation. This phenomenon occurs in politics too when individuals become disheartened, disappointed or cynical about the political system or its representatives. This can stem from broken promises, perceived corruption, or a sense that political actions do not align with the ideals or expectations held by the public. Such disillusionment may lead to decreased trust in political institutions and feeling of detachment from the political process. Lucius Banda captures such sentiments in "Kalata Yachitatu", also starring Thomas Chibade. In great disgust of how the country is, there is a clear show of how the people's expectations have been thrown out of the window with a look at how everything is turning out; Chibade sings in the song:

*Mukakhuta ma whiskey mukumanena chipongwe, mwatitu chuma chikuyenda pomwe ife tili nkhwankhwankhwa. Tidziwa Mulungu alipo, tikuona zolengedwa zake, tidziwa chuma chikuyenda tikayiona ndalama, koma popanda ndalama ndi nkhani yopanda mboni, mukamapanga phwando lanu musamayike pa radio, ana akumativuta tikadye nawo phwandolo.* (The leaders continue to pretend that the situation is okay, while ignoring the reality on the ground. The people only place their hope in God who is seeing their predicament and will help them in their suffering. The people will only agree to the saying once they see that things have really improved but they would not buy any lip service).

The lyrics, like ink paints on a musical parchment, unravel tales of political betrayal, societal disappointments, and the erosion of a once cherished trust. Through haunting chords and distressing refrains, the epistle here resonates with the collective disillusionment of a generation. There is a clear show of doubt and a fading trust in the political landscape. As regards to mourning, the disillusionment weaves a collective lament, a visible reality reflecting how the people are now in mixed reactions to what the country has turned to be after high expectations placed on the leaders' shoulders.

These lines are followed by Banda's own, as he again invites listeners to share a disillusioned idea of what the people are facing now in contrast to what they were promised. He sings in wandering tones:

*Yapita kuti 50 kwacha timkalandira ku msonkhano, ngati zinali zoyipa, mwasinthanitsa ndi chani, mwana ukamulanda pen uzimupatsako chidole, kamkaoneka kuchepa mmidzimu kamkatitchova, timkagulako matemba, maluwa, mchere ndi soda, mwabwera mwati mzoyipa, koma mwati tizilota, maloto ochekenila, opanda nawo chekeni, munthu wanjala salota, amangolota kumanda* (The political leaders have stopped giving people handouts as they say it's a bad gesture yet during campaigns it was a norm. The singer highlights that the handouts were solving their daily problems; so, stopping the practice is equal to betrayal).

The changed behaviour is what raises tentacles of disillusionment after the visible deviation of acts that were seemingly done in good faith but have now been stopped and described as bad to the masses. Stangor (2014) has a similar position when he argues that, when politicians alter their conducts, adopting practices that appear self-serving, inconsistent, or contrary to the public interests, it erodes the trust constituents people had placed on them. Rebuilding trust typically requires transparency, accountability and a genuine commitment to the values that initially garnered support. Lucius Banda goes on discussing candidly how the regime has failed to deliver on their promises, saying:

*Chipani cha ku mmawa ndinkadalira inuyo, mwandikhumudwitsa* (disappointment grips me when I see this notable party from the eastern region) *olo galu amene amatha kukumbukila uyo omugenda dzulo* (even a dog remembers those who were throwing stones at it), *kodi si dzulo lomweli tinali akapolo ife, oponyedwa mu ndende* (we were there previously when this regime arrested us in the days gone by), *lero chakoma ndi*



*chani kuiwala udindo otsutsa zoyipa* (why are we then forgetting to take our stand to oppose their failure to deliver on their promises).

The dismay of looking at someone who has the potential to right some wrongs doing the contrary is unbelievably mind boggling. This is an example of how people would rather face the wall and cry in anguish or shame over issues that they believed would be handled perfectly but it is all turning ugly in their face; funny enough, the people seem not to be concerned. It is the people who are watching that get jilted by such inconsistent acts towards commitments.

The two choruses of “Kalata Yachitatu” and “Kalata Yachisanu” hit hard on the theme of disillusionment, dissecting into emotions of great allusion to mourning and ambivalence. In listening to them one can easily get gripped at such well woven lines as they tell a similar tale. “Kalata Yachitatu” chorus goes:

*Usandiuze mwana wanga, moyo uwu ndi ovuta. Mpake lero tizingotchona, takaona ku London, takaona America, amalawi tizingotchona, usalire mwana wanga moyo owu ndi ozunza, mpake lero tizingotchona* (my child, life is hard, no wonder Malawians are opting to stay abroad).

As if that were not enough, “Kalata Yachisanu” has a chorus that goes in the same wavelengths saying:

*Mphawi anakwa chani, kukhalira kumangoyuzidwa, nenani chomwe anakwitsa, mwinamwakwe tipepese, kodi tingalowere kuti. Mmbuyomu sitikufuna kubwelera, mkale lero zinthu zavuta, a Yehova ndinu mutithandize* (what did the poor people do to be taken for a ride every time, their only hope is in the Lord who will rescue them one day).

This is the epitome of disillusionment as it is embraced in mourning by the writer in art form that resonates deeply with the masses. In the eyes and writing of Lucius Banda, there is a great show of weight being carried on his shoulders as shown clearly in his voice. The citizens have become apathetic towards the political process; feeling they are only puppets, their participation and votes do not bring about the desired change. The song has lines which go like:

*Boma ili tinalivutikila, tinaguba ma demo chaka chonse, tinkaganiza tili ndi mtima umodzi, ena ankasunga kampeni, abwana chonde musapange chifundo, mchitidwe uwu wafika popweteka, ngati munthu akupanga chibwana, bwana azipita kwawo.* (We fought for this new regime through demonstrations all year long, but others have come in with ulterior motives. Those who are in to bring chaos, please get them off the ship as soon as possible).

The reality of protests is that they may influence public opinion or government policy through the use of persuasion and pressure (Jackson, 2020). In highlighting the role taken by the masses, there is a hint of a fatherly figure participating in the fight for change. The sentiments above may seem straight forward but it is important to highlight the fact that the visibility of ambivalent patterns may tell different tales. Ambivalence allows for a more nuanced and open-ended exploration as the epistles are leaving room for diverse interpretations and the acknowledgement that issues like disillusionment often lack simple solutions. As in the words of Sigmund Freud (1953), in these songs we witness the leakage of the artists’ unconscious minds into consciousness. The artists vent their repressed desires, their anger through songs. What is interesting in these songs is that they were sung between 1997 and 2022, which is a long period. During this period, Malawi has been ruled by five different leaders, and, yet the song remains the same. Promises made but not fulfilled as expected, leaving the masses disillusioned, no wonder the paternal voice is now turning to God in “Kalata Yachisanu”, having realized that banking on political leadership may yield the desired results.

## CONCLUSION

The study has explored the leakage of the unconscious mind through epistolary singing/writing. It has been observed that the six songs: “Kuno Zavuta”, “Zavutabe”, “Kalata Yachitatu”, “Kalata Yachinayi”, “Kalata Yachisanu” and “Bweraniko” are political, poignant with emotions triggered by unfulfilled promises by politicians. The songs tackle such societal issues as economic challenges, leadership struggles, HIV and AIDS as well as disillusionment with campaign promises. The study argues that epistolary writing/singing is a powerful tool that the two artists have used to ably vent out their anger at politicians, who usually take advantage of the poor masses’ ignorance to lie to them. Through the songs, the two musicians mask their criticism against the political powers that are there in society. Using Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory, the study argues that the epistolary songs provide checks and balances to political leaders as they (songs) remind them (political leaders) of their campaign promises, which do not get fulfilled at the end of the day. While the artists mourn death in the songs, the study observes this death symbolizes the failure of political leaders entrusted with responsibility to take care of the poor masses.

## REFERENCES

1. Andrews, A. (2015). *The Ethics of Mourning: The Role of Material Culture and Public Politics in the Book of the Duchess and the Pearl Poem*. MIT.
2. Chirwa, W. C. (1998). *Democracy, Ethnicity and Regionalism*. Blantyre: CLAIM.
3. Eesuola, O. S. (2015). *Political Protest Songs and Actual Protest Values: Analysis of Fela’s “Sorrow, Tears & Blood” and Bob Marley’s “Stand up, Get up”*.
4. Fine, R. (2016). *Freud: A Critical Re-evaluation of his Theories*.
5. Freud, S. (1953). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. London: Hogarth Press.
6. Garratt, J. (2018). *Music and Politics. A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge.
7. King, E. (2020). *The Roles of Music in Effecting Change: Considerations about Public Policy*.
8. Limbong, A. (2020). *How are micro aggressions taken out?*
9. Mary, L. (2019). *The Ultimate Goal of Psychoanalytic Therapy*. HMN.
10. Mitchell, P. (2016). *You Say you want a Revolution: Popular Music and Revolt in France, United States of America and Britain*. HAOL.
11. Morrissey, C. & Sherman, A. (2017). *The Social Epistemic Value of Art*.
12. Popova, M. (2014). *Kafka’s Remarkable Letter to his Abusive Father*. The Marginalia.
13. Stangor, C. (2014). *The Origins of Personality*. BC campus.
14. Torrey, J. (2020). *Protest Music in Response to the United States’ Oppressive Protest Music in Response to the United States’ Oppressive Political Culture: An Analysis of Beyoncé’s “Freedom” and Janelle Political Culture: An Analysis of Beyoncé’s “Freedom” and Janelle Monáe’s “Americans”*. Hmc.
15. Tostensen, A. (2017). *Malawi: A Political Economy Analysis*. Norway. CMI.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

1. **Atanzio Ernest Kamwamba** is an academic specialized in English Literature. He currently works as a lecturer in English Literature and Linguistics at Nkhoma University, Lilongwe – Malawi. Kamwamba has also taught, on part time basis, at Nalikule College of Education and Catholic University of Malawi. He holds a Master of Arts in Literature from The University of Malawi, and a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Mzuzu University. His research interests include gender studies, sexuality studies, postcolonial studies, education as well as ODeL (open, distance and e-learning).
2. **Samson Apatsa Banda** is a celebrated Malawian poet, whose poetry is famously known as “Apatsa Psalms”. He is a language teacher, currently in fourth year studying for the award of a Bachelor of Education (Languages and Literature) degree at Nkhoma University.