

PROFESSOR JACK MAPANJE'S POETRY READING AT CEDAT CONFERENCE HALL ON 12TH MARCH, 2013.

BY: DR. SUSAN N.KIGULI, CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

- Professor Jack Mapanje, and the guest writers at the African Writers' Trust International Conference,
- The Representative of the Vice Chancellor and our Ag Principal in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences,
- The Ag Deputy Principal,
- The Dean of the School of Languages Literature and Communication,
- The Director of the African Writers' Trust: Ms Goretti Kyomuhendo,
- Colleagues,
- Our Students,
- All Professor Mapanjes' fans

Good Afternoon.

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Professor Mapanje, I stand here to welcome you on behalf of us all and I feel completely overwhelmed by this most honourable task. I feel overwhelmed because when I came across your work as a student of the legendary poet Prof. David Rubadiri, I was so much in awe of your work, I never ever thought, first that I would meet you which I eventually did but it never crossed my mind that I would represent the Department of Literature to welcome you to Makerere University in 2013.

In those faraway days my classmates and I were so in love with your work that we competed at who would get the most unfamiliar information about you and your work and that is how we came across the fact that the name Jack stands for your first three names John Alfred Clement.

Professor Mapanje, it is almost impossible for us as a Department that teaches your work to explain how so happy we are to have you here. To be able to tell our students that this is the writer of **"Of Chameleons and Gods, The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison, Skipping without Ropes, The last of the Sweet Bananas, The Beasts of Nalunga and And the Crocodiles are Hungry at Night.**

Now we can say to our students: this person is the writer of cheeky sassy humorous verse against dictators, vampires, the mean spirited, the chameleons and the self appointed self imposed gods and this is the man who skips with his hope.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this afternoon brings us a poet with a variety of competencies, Professor Mapanje is also a distinguished linguist, editor and scholar. But I think Professor Mapanje's best accolade is his passion for poetry and his ability to craft it so well that unfortunately it drew the dictator Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's rude attention and earned him detention without charge and without trial at the infamous Mikuyu Maximum Prison.

Well, dictators have their own unique ways of sporting talent and I will leave Professor Mapanje himself to talk about that. I just would like to say that he has also been rightly recognized for his work by being given the 1988 Rotterdam Poetry Award, the 1990 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award, the 2002 African Literature Association Fonlon-Nichols Award and he is a fellow of University of London. In addition, he has been visiting professor at Leeds University, University of York, at York St John University; a tenured Senior Lecturer at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and is now on a sabbatical year at University of Botswana.

I would at this point like to say that we owe much to the African Writers' Trust and all the sponsors of the Uganda International Writers' Conference, 2013 for getting you here with other African writers from various corners of the globe. I would like to particularly thank Ms. Goretti Kyomuhendo for letting us know that Professor Mapanje was coming and for offering to lend him to us for an afternoon. We cannot be more grateful. The truth is that my Third Year Poetry Class and I could not wait to hear you speak. I would like to say again how so pleased this packed conference hall is to witness your presence here.

I would also like to add that the College of Humanities and Social Sciences has sponsored this event and our Ag. Principal and Ag. Deputy Principal have been very generous in their support and advice.

The School of Languages, Literature and Communication is the host for this event and our Dean, Dr. Okello Ogwang, your good friend Professor Mapanje is the key to our gathering here. He has firmly supported and advised and greatly encouraged this event to happen.

In the same vein, the event has been organized by the Department of Literature and the Makerere Literature Association. I want to say a special thank you to the Makerere University Literature Association for their zeal and joy at being part of the preparatory meetings and To Professor Gakwandi for the tireless planning.

I would like to thank the Senior Public Relations Officer, Ms Ritah Namisango and her team and our Communication Officer, Ms Hasifa Kabejja for working very closely with us to organize this event.

Once again, Professor Mapanje welcome to the place where we build for the future. I thank you all.