

The “Rhetoric of Animality”, Animal Imagery, and Dr. Kamuzu Banda’s Dictatorship in the Poetry of Jack Mapanje

Syned MTHATIWA

University of Malawi, Malawi

ABSTRACT

In his poetry the Malawian poet, Jack Mapanje, uses animal imagery to respond to socio-political events in his country, especially during the dictatorial reign of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Malawi’s first president, who ruled that country from independence in 1964 to 1994. Using animal imagery he stereotypes, objectifies and inferiorises through ridicule and mockery those in power thereby sanctioning their overthrow and replacement. Through the use of animal imagery he also deconstructs the view of Dr. Banda as a benevolent leader or Messiah and depicts him as a greedy and bloodthirsty old man who only cared about no one else but himself.

Keywords: pejorative animal metaphor, imagery, dictatorship, satire, Kamuzuism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ubiquity of animals is a feature one rarely fails to notice in the poetry of the Malawian poet, Jack Mapanje. Mapanje uses animals as metaphors for human characters that he holds in contempt or seeks to criticise, satirise, scorn, and lampoon. In most cases these are Malawian politicians, especially Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda who ruled Malawi from 1964–94 and his supporters. Mapanje also uses animal metaphors for the poetic voice (or himself), fellow prisoners at Mikuyu Maximum Security Prison, exiled Malawians and other victims of Banda, as well as other victims of oppressors and despots around the world. Where metaphors are used in this way the aim is to underscore the harmlessness, victimhood, and suffering of these victims while emphasising the oppressors’ evil and injustice.¹ In cases where the metaphor is for the poetic voice it also

¹ It is important to note that oppressors also use animal metaphors and symbols to justify oppression, violence and abuse. The epithetic dog, for example, as Njabulo Ndebele (2007: 253) shows in his essay “The Year of the Dog: A Journey of the Imagination” “is a pervasive metaphor regularly used [in South Africa] to justify righteous brutality.” Ndebele argues that in South African society, and indeed in many other societies around the world, “the word ‘dog’ is never far away in the imagining of violence and abuse” and the expression “starving dog, is an insult that lays the ground for the beating of someone.” Reconfiguring someone

highlights the creativity and ingenuity of the poet (Mthathiwa 2009). Besides representing animals as images for certain individuals, the poet also represents them as symbols for events in his life. Some of Mapanje's animal metaphors are conventional, that is, those that have "their metaphorical meaning, as well as their literal meaning, listed in the dictionary," while others are original and therefore "unsettle our modes of perception, feeling, or action," as they have not "achieved currency as an acceptable way of constructing, conceptualizing, and interacting with reality" (Goatly 2006: 16). My focus in this paper is on pejorative metaphors or on animal imagery as a weapon of satire and scorn in Mapanje's poetry.

In this paper I wish to show the ways in which through the use of animal metaphors Mapanje stereotypes, objectifies and inferiorises through ridicule and mockery those in power thereby sanctioning their overthrow and replacement. I also wish to show how the metaphorical interpretations of Mapanje's pejorative animal metaphors deconstruct the view widely held by Malawians that Banda was a leader who had the best interests of his people at heart, a leader who sacrificed his thriving medical career to rescue Malawians from the bondage of colonialism and led them on a path to freedom, development, and prosperity. In the paper I use ethnobiological and cultural classification of animals as a framework in analyzing and examining Mapanje's use of animal imagery, names and epithets in relation to Banda and his cabal.

Humans have always used their "knowledge of the natural world in constructing a meaningful social existence" (Howard and Rensel 1991: np, Rodriguez 2009: 80). Animals are one aspect of the natural world mostly used in this respect. Animals have been used as discursive tools for "the great flexibility that [they] provide with regard to metaphoric construction." The same animal can be used "in a variety of ways." For instance a lion may be used metaphorically to "allude to a wide range of" attributes and associations – royalty, ruthlessness, and brutality, among others. Besides, "the same behaviours [of a particular animal] may be given entirely different meanings" in different contexts and/ or societies. Perhaps it is to this metaphoric flexibility that Claude Lévi-Strauss was referring when he observed that "animals are good to think " since, as Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (1991: np) tell us, "[t]hey provide human beings everywhere with a rich set of possibilities for constructing meaning, and for commenting about the nature of social life." Howard and Rensel (1991: np) also rightly point out that "the communicative codes humans construct out of animal metaphors [...] permit the expression of subtle nuances of connotative meanings, a fact which makes them so suitable for social commentaries" and "for expressing cultural values."

As a writer Mapanje (1975: 32–33) believes that a poet, like the *griots* or *izimbongi* (praise poets) of old, should offer "constructive criticism of either the

into the image of an animal can, therefore, be a means of trying to justify their abuse, oppression and exploitation, on racial, class, or political grounds, among others.

leadership or the society.”² He sees his role as involving the examination of all aspects of life in his society for he, like Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2006: 82), believes that criticism of a society’s institutions and structures is a very healthy thing as it helps the people in that society to move forward. This constructive criticism was all but lost in Malawian oral poetry (songs) during Banda’s reign as they were changed to “watered down propaganda to praise the new [postcolonial] leaders with very little poetic insight” (Mapanje 1975: 29–30; Chirambo 2005). It is not strange therefore that in his poetry he deconstructs the view that Kamuzu Banda was a courageous, wise and dynamic leader, as his supporters would have us believe, by depicting him as an animal. As Irene Rodriguez (2009: 80) observes, “the associations of people with animals tend to convey negative evaluations.” To underscore his negative evaluations of Banda and his supporters, Mapanje focuses on the negative attributes of the animals he associates with these people. Every society or culture has its own folk understanding (cultural classification or attitude) of various animals. In a particular culture some animals may have a reputation for being traitorous, brave, cowardly or stupid. Some animals may have positive and negative (or both) reputations, and in metaphorical usage, these traits may be superimposed on the humans the animals represent. Rodriguez (2009: 81) rightly observes that “the attitudes held by the members of a community towards particular animals may be responsible for endowing the animal name with either positive or negative implications.” Along with the folk attitudes and associations, ethnobiological taxonomies help in decoding or interpreting animal metaphors. These taxonomies, according to Rodriguez (2009: 82), “usually rely upon five basic parameters, namely, habitat, size, appearance, behavior and the relation of the animal to people.”

In his metaphorical/ allegorical representation of animals, Mapanje mainly focuses on the negative traits that society associates with particular animals such as the lion or the hyena. This tendency is, I think, determined by the context and purpose of the poems.

The context of most of Mapanje’s poems is the dictatorship of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda in Malawi. During his reign Banda allowed no opposition or dissent. Anyone who was suspected to hold contrary views to those of Banda and his party was detained without trial, forced into exile or even killed. Mapanje himself was a victim of that dictatorship as he was arrested and detained in Banda’s notorious Mikuyu Maximum Security Prison for three years, seven months and sixteen days, without charge or trial. Although the actual reason for his detention still remains unknown, since he was never charged, it is indisputable that the reason for his arrest and detention had something to do with the politics of the time and the activities of the National

² The *griots* and the *izibongi* were/are oral praise singers (or poets) in West Africa and South Africa respectively. Mapanje considers their role envious as they “acted as the nation’s entertainers, historians, poets, teachers and critics at once” (Mapanje 1997b: 222). As Anthony Nazombe (1995: 147) observes, “Mapanje has increasingly been adopting such a stance towards Malawi’s political leadership in his poetry.”

Censorship Board (see Chirambo 2007a, 2007b; Mapanje 1989, 1997a, 1997c).³ Mapanje (1997b: 219) himself suspects that his lunch hour arrest at Gymkhana Club in Zomba on September 25, 1987 that led to his detention in Mikuyu Prison until his release in May 1991, came as a result of what he calls “my peeping into the dictator’s drawer” (exposing the evils of the Banda regime, possibly in his poetry). After his release from prison Mapanje went into exile in the United Kingdom where he remains to this day.

As a satirist and social critic, in his poetry Mapanje focuses on the political situation in the country during and after Dr. Banda, especially the former, and his experiences at Mikuyu Prison. This means that to discuss Mapanje’s poetry is to indirectly discuss the historical events in the country. Thus, the context of writing is as important a part in this paper as the poetry itself in discussing the animal imagery in the poetry.

While Mapanje uses cryptic language and attempts to obscure the victim of his sardonic humour, satire and lampoon in his first collection of poetry, *Of Chameleons and Gods* (1981), he makes no such attempts in his post-detention poetry which has appeared while he is in exile in the United Kingdom. In the subsequent collections he dispenses with cryptic language but maintains his use of metaphors, especially animal metaphors, myths, and traditional aspects: beliefs, ritual, and national history. It is also in these subsequent collections, especially in *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* (1993) and in *Skipping Without Ropes* (1998), where the “rhetoric of animality” and animal metaphors are most prevalent (Mthatiwa 2009). The expression “rhetoric of animality” here refers to the tendency of giving people, institutions, or societies that one does not like or despises derogatory animal names such as beast and brute, or referring to them using names of particular animals as a crude tactic of name-calling (Baker 1993: 77ff). Obviously, it is his anger and bitterness against the people and the regime that imprisoned him which inspires him to criticise and satirise them explicitly in his post-detention collections.

2. ANIMALS, BANDA AND THE MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY’S BRUTALITY AND EVIL

A number of scholars rightly observe that “[i]n the forging of social [and one may add, personal and political] identity dualisms seem to play a pivotal role and the use of metaphors tends to reinforce the dichotomy between ‘the self’ and ‘the other’” (Rodriguez 2009: 78). As a poet, Mapanje frequently resorts to

³ A National Censorship Board was established in Malawi in 1972 following the introduction of the Censorship and Control of Entertainments Act in 1968. The board was mandated to declare publications as undesirable (Moto 2001: 5; see also Gibbs 1988). This Board, in Tiyambe Zeleza’s (1996: 11) words, “discharged its calling with impeccable thoroughness, regularly issuing ‘permits’ and ‘certificates of approval’ and declaring numerous publications, pictures, statues and records ‘undesirable’.”

animal imagery to highlight the corruption of the politicians and their supporters during the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)/ Banda era and as a means of critiquing them and calling for their removal from power.

Through the use of animal epithets and pejorative metaphors for president Hastings Kamuzu Banda and his agents and hangers-on Mapanje highlights the brutality, ferocity, viciousness and evil of the MCP regime. He also satirises and lampoons these people by signalling their stupidity, distasteful and contemptible nature as well as their fickleness and untrustworthiness. Further, in using ignoble and vicious animals as metaphors for dictator Banda and his supporters Mapanje exposes the moral weaknesses of the politicians and calls for their removal from power. As Steve Baker (1993: 113) observes, “casting of a hated or despised human into the role or image of an animal is [...] a very frequent and effective means of stereotyping them, of objectifying them, and rendering them inferior”. Through his pejorative animal metaphors Mapanje structures and influences our attitudes and behaviour towards the oppressors, and suggests that since they have degenerated into irrational animals, they can no longer be trusted as leaders and should be replaced.

Although Banda’s supporters were many, and came from all walks of life, those singled out by Mapanje for attack are especially members of the Youth League, the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP), the Special Branch, the police, the army, and the Women’s League and others in positions of authority who were instrumental in ensuring the strength and smooth running of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) machinery. The MYP, the most repressive instrument at Banda’s disposal, were a paramilitary wing of the Malawi Congress Party. They were established in 1963 (Phiri 2000) and legislated into existence by parliament in 1964 (Chirambo 2004). Initially they were conceived as a means by which the MCP would mobilize the country’s youth “for a clearly defined role in the development of the emerging nation”; this would include spearheading rural development and indoctrinating the Malawi people in the fashion of Kamuzuism (Phiri 2000: 1–3). But later the MYP were to be heavily armed and receive adequate military training that enabled them to serve as the Banda regime’s private army used to arrest, detain, torture, kill, maim or force into exile those who did not conform to the dictatorship. In this regard they duplicated some of the duties of the army and the police (Chirambo 2004). The MYP policed party meetings, markets, and bus stations. They also forced people to attend party meetings and activities and to buy the party membership card. Members of the MYP were above the law. They could not be arrested by police without prior permission of their commanding officers. Besides, any person arrested by the MYP and brought to the police for detention could only be released by the MYP themselves (Chirambo 2004: 151). As a result many innocent people languished in detention without trial.

Apart from the MYP and the Special Branch, the MCP’s other “apparatuses of control and repression” (Schoffeleers 1999: 312) or instruments of controlling the people at the district and village levels of society were members of the MCP

Youth League and the MCP Women's League (the youth and women's wings of the party respectively) who also acted as vigilante groups.

3. BANDA AS A BEAST

One strategy that Mapanje adopts to stereotype and inferiorise Banda, and to emphasise his wickedness and cruelty, is to dehumanise him by calling him a beast, brute, monster or fiend. Mapanje's draws this strategy from the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, or, more poignantly, BANDA IS AN ANIMAL metaphor as the terms "brute" and "beast" are synonyms for animal. Such references to Banda begin to appear in Mapanje's first post-detention publication, *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* (1993), particularly in the third section titled "Chattering Wagtails," which has poems that deal with Mapanje's arrest and experiences in prison, and the last section called "The Release and Other Curious Sights," which includes poems that deal with his release from prison and the experiences thereafter.

We begin to see this dehumanisation of Banda in the title poem of the collection "The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison" (1993: 48–52). In this poem Mapanje uses "the technique of literary self-effacement as a strategy for excluding his own physical and emotional reaction to his situation by presenting the poem through the point-of-view of another inmate" of Mikuyu Prison (Uledi-Kamanga 1998: 43). The speaker in the poem welcomes the poet to the section of the prison called D4:

Welcome to the chattering wagtails of
D4. Before your Gymkhana Club story,
Let's begin with the history of the wing
You've come from. They call it the New
Building, which is so marvellously blank
As you saw, that you'd have cracked up
Within months, however tough-willed;
Thank these D4s for moving you here (1993: 48).

The speaker then proceeds to tell him that the "Secretary General of the Party" who is unnamed in the poem conceived that wing of the prison which is called "New Building" on behalf of the people. The Secretary General had conspired with an unnamed Chief of Special Branch to depose their country's leader – who is variously called "the Monster," "the Beast," and "the Brute" in the poem – in a bloodless coup after which he and his "'trusted' henchpersons" (1993: 49) would be thrown into this wing of the prison. The remaining "Party Executives" would be thrown "into / One of [the] eight large cells ... divided / Into fourteen little cells, two paces by / One, named A-wing ..." (1993: 49). The plot was, however, uncovered and the conspirators were arrested. Ironically, they were the first people to be detained in the "New Building." The poet calls their detention

“opening the gates of the New Building,” / [and] Mopping the wagtail shit of their creation,” (1993: 50) that is, confronting the evil of their creation.

The words “monster”, “beast” and “brute” which refer to Banda begin with capitals in the poem to highlight Banda’s irrationality and insensitivity to the plight of his detractors (real or imagined) and to interrogate the Messianic image of the president created and anchored by the praises heaped upon him by his supporters.⁴ In this poem Mapanje is faithful to the history of Malawi of the 1970s. The despotic and brutish leader in the poem is none other than Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The references to Machipisa Mnthali, one of the longest serving prisoners in Malawi whom the prisoners call “Nelson Mandela of Malawi” (he had spent twenty-four years in Banda’s prison by then) (1993: 49–50), place names such as Gymkhana Club, Mikuyu Prison, Zomba Central Prison, Dzeleka Prison, and historical figures like Dick Matenje, Aaron Gadama, Twaibu Sangala, and David Chiwanga, make it clear that what are being referred to in the poem are historical events in Malawi. The unnamed Secretary General of the party is evidently Albert Muwalo Nqumayo, while the Chief of Special Branch is Focus Martin Gwede. Albert Muwalo Nqumayo was the Secretary General of the Malawi Congress Party while Focus Martin Gwede was the Chief of Special Branch in the 1970s, one of the most troubled decades in Malawi’s history, when scores of Malawians found themselves behind bars without charge or trial. Muwalo Nqumayo and Gwede have gained notoriety for masterminding most of these arrests. Speculation has it that they deliberately arrested people to tarnish the image of Banda who they were planning to depose so that Malawians should not sympathise with him after the coup. It is also Albert Muwalo who is credited with planning the “New Building,” an additional wing to Mikuyu Prison which he allegedly intended to house Banda and his henchpersons – who include members of the Kadzamira family to which Banda’s Official Hostess (“official mistresses” in the poem [1993: 49]) belongs. In 1976 Muwalo and Gwede were arrested and charged with plotting to topple Banda in a coup. They were sentenced to death, but later Gwede’s sentence was commuted to a life sentence. Muwalo was hanged (“opted to hang” [1993: 50]) and Gwede who “eventually went bonkers” (1993: 50) did time at Zomba Central Prison.

“The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison” is a poem in which for the first time in his poetry Mapanje calls Banda “the Monster,” “the Beast,” and “the Brute.” Through this dehumanisation of Banda Mpanje resists the libratory discourse of Banda and the ideology of Kamuzuism that depicted Hastings Kamuzu Banda as the Father and Founder of the Malawi Nation, a Christ or Messianic figure who left his flourishing medical practice in Ghana to come and

⁴ One of the praise songs for Banda had the following lyrics:

Leader: *Kuno ku Malawi kuno ngakhale mu Afrika* (Here in Malawi and even in the whole of Africa)

All: *Palibe wina pulezidenti woposa Kamuzu* (There is no better president than Kamuzu [Banda]).

liberate his people from colonial bondage and lead them for life, and as “the fount of all wisdom [who] always knew what was best for the nation” (Phiri 2000: 2; see also Chiramba 2007a, 2007b, 2004). Instead, Mapanje offers a counter-discourse of Banda as a cruel, bloodthirsty and scheming old man who was not interested in the welfare of his people but in the consolidation of his hold on power by alienating himself from some of his young ministers, some of whom (such as Orton Chirwa and Masauko Chipembere) had invited him to Malawi from Ghana to lead the independence struggle, and by using legislations such as the Preservation of Public Security Act and the Censorship and Control of Entertainments Act to high-handedly deal with his detractors and opponents by detaining, killing, or forcing them into exile.

In “Guilty of Nipping Her Pumpkin Leaves” (1998: 66–67) Banda is referred to as a “monster,” “beast,” and “fiend.” In this poem Mapanje who returns home in October 1994, after the removal of Banda in a democratic election, “with a film crew from Diverse Productions of London to record for the BBC’s TV programme *Africa ’95*” (Mapanje 1998: 78) decides to pay a woman vegetable seller for the pumpkin leaves he had borrowed from her seven years before – that is before his detention and exile. In the ensuing conversation the woman who does not remember him accuses him of returning home “to ridicule her / Nudity [poverty] with his cameras as strange visitors / In the dead monster’s regime once did” (1998: 66). The death in the poem is not literal but a metaphor for the loss of political power. Banda died on November 25, 1997. The woman declares that she would not allow her children’s pictures to be taken either, regardless of whether he is a tourist or traveller because pictures of them taken by tourists in the days of Banda have brought no relief to their poverty but have ended up being pieces of amusement for the photographers (“have fattened the albums of the like / Of him before” [1998: 66]). She declares that she would not allow such a thing to happen again in the new political dispensation: “Not today with the beast [Banda] / Gone, never if he should decide to resurrect!” (1998: 66). Mapanje tells her he understands her anger against Banda saying “I too withheld / The spite I felt for the beast to save my life / And my children” (1998: 67) and goes on to remind the woman who he is and the joke they shared (the woman buoyantly marrying her daughters to him “Every time he visited [her] stall” [1998: 67]). This jogs her memory and wonders what kept the poet from returning home immediately after Banda’s fall like the other exiles whom she calls “Those buffaloes who left these kraals many dry / Seasons ago” (1998: 67). Later, before accepting his money, she tells him that the country is still poor and hunger-stricken (as a result of a drought) after Banda but the people expected no less, as she wonders “But whoever dreamt that the fiend would go for / The thundering rains to pour?” (1998: 67). The reference to Banda as monster, fiend or beast in the poetry in an attempt to expose Banda’s wickedness and misrule is contrary to the official version which held Banda as the best leader Malawi had ever had and would ever have.

Another strategy that Mapanje adopts to inferiorise, ridicule and mock Banda and to highlight the ruthlessness of the Malawi leader and his supporters is to pick various animals to associate them with the brutality, viciousness, cruelty and insensitivity of Banda, his henchpersons, supporters, and the regime as a whole. These animals include those that are classified as ferocious carnivorous mammals such as lions, leopards, and hyenas; reptiles such as crocodiles, lizards and snakes; pests and vermin such as rats, scorpions, bats and wasps; and vectors and parasites such as mosquitoes, and cockroaches, among others. Where Banda is predicated of any of these vicious animals it is the negative attributes assigned to these animals by society through cultural or folk taxonomy that are of concern for the poet. The animals he picks have negative attributes or traits that, in theriomorphic terms, are seen as similar to those exhibited by Banda or his cohorts. For instance, Banda is predicated of a lion in a number of Mapanje’s poems. In the popular imagination a lion is respected for his bravery and strength. These attributes are the ones his supporters saw in Banda and, coupled with his booming voice that recalled a lion’s roar, are the reason they hailed him *Mkango wa Malawi* (The Lion of Malawi). But in Mapanje’s poetry the lion’s (read Banda’s) attributes stretch to brutality, cruelty and viciousness. Many folk stories in Malawi figure a lion as king of animals. But in some folk stories the lion overstretches himself and becomes brutal and cruel. It is the “Lion King’s” brutality in most of these stories that lead to his downfall. This corresponds with Banda: he was a tyrannical leader who lost a Parliamentary and Presidential election in 1994 to his rival Bakili Muluzi. In most of Mapanje’s poems, it is the cruelty, viciousness and brutality of the lion that comes to the fore – and rarely his bravery, royalty and strength. On the other hand, Banda’s agents and supporters are variously called leopards, crocodiles, hounds, squirrels, cats, vipers or puff adders, cockroaches, scorpions, leeches, and mosquitoes in a number of poems. In all these references the idea is to question their humanity and to emphasize the agents’ evil, viciousness and brutality.

In the poem “The Release: Who Are You, *Imbongi?*” (1993: 71–72), the first poem in the section “The Release and Other Curious Sights” of the *Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* Mapanje refers to Banda as the lion. The poem details the experiences Mapanje had on the day he was released from prison. The impression one gets upon reading the poem is that the police were surprised by the public outcry that was triggered by Mapanje’s arrest and wanted to know who he exactly was. And this is how Anthony Nazombe (1995: 146–147) understands this poem. The truth, however, is that the Inspector General of police at the time of his arrest asked him this question before sending him to Mikuyu Prison.⁵ His reply to the Inspector General’s question comes in the

⁵ When Mapanje was arrested the police wanted to know from him why he was arrested. Mapanje tells us about his interview with the police in the following words:

There was a huge oval table. At the head of it was the inspector general of police and the rest of the table was filled with the chief commissioners of police from the

poem where he wonders why the police failed to ask him that question before they arrested him. Reverting to animal imagery he uses three animals: lion, rhinoceros and leopard to represent Banda and some of his henchpersons:

When the lion wrung the gazelle
Under his smoking armpits, when
The foaming rhinoceros pierced his
Sharp horn or the leopard pounced;

Did you ask, *imbongi*, who are you? (1993: 71)

Although the poem is addressed to the Inspector General of Police, the lion mentioned in the section quoted above refers to Banda, while the rhinoceros and the leopard refer to his henchpersons. In this section the three animals are portrayed as violent and brutal. The lion “wrung the gazelle” while the rhinoceros “pierced his / Sharp horn” and the “the leopard pounced” (1993: 71). The murderous fury of the lion and the rhinoceros is also clear in the poem. The lion has “smoking armpits” while the rhinoceros is said to foam at the mouth. There is a correspondence between the murderous fury of the lion in the poem and that of Banda when he sanctioned the incarceration of the poet who is the hapless “gazelle” in the poem. With regard to the leopard, in his poetry Mapanje mostly uses the expression “the leopards of Dedza” in reference to the Tembo and Kadzamira families as is the case in “Making Our Clowns Martyrs (or Returning Home Without Chauffeurs)” (1981: 59–60). Here the “leopards of / Dedza hills” (1981: 59) are said to “comb the land or hedge before their assault” in reference to the families’ ruthless dealings with everyone who appeared to be a threat to their ambitions to succeed Banda or their continued enjoyment of Banda’s favours.⁶

whole country. I sat in the corner and the inspector general said: ‘Dr Mapanje, His Excellency the Life President has directed me today to detain you. Because this is His Excellency’s directive, I am afraid to tell you that we are not going to investigate your case because it would look like we were not trusting the higher authorities.

‘But, because we are not investigating, I brought these commissioners here to tell me what it is that you have done, to find out whether you are in our books. They all tell me that they don’t know of you. So, we thought, before we take you to where His Excellency wants you to be, we should ask you: first of all, who you are, and, secondly, why do you think we should arrest you?’

... It was madness, more Kafka than you could ever think of. He was actually asking his prisoner why he should be detained. I didn’t say anything, I couldn’t say anything. The man was so embarrassed he didn’t know what to do (Bunting 2000: np).

⁶ Cecilia Kadzamira, Banda’s official hostess (or mistress as is popularly believed) and John Tembo, her uncle, are believed to have ruled Malawi along with Banda as a “triumvirate.” These two are also believed to have been behind some of the atrocities that the MCP regime committed (See Malawi High Court 1995–96; Africa Watch 1990: 16–17).

Further, we also encounter Banda, the lion’s brutality in the poem “Beginning Where We Left Off,” (1998: 61), where he is referred to as “the senile lion” who accidentally falls “In the chasm of his own doing” (1998: 61):

So now that the senile lion has accidentally fallen
In the chasm of his own digging, let us thank the Lord
And resume the true fight we abandoned years ago

Let us begin by singing in the native tongues the old
Guards cut under the pretext of building our nation (1998: 61)

The evocation of senility in the poem signals Banda’s old age, as he was about 96 at the time he fell from power. The brutality of the lion is seen in the fact that his fall encourages the poet-protagonist to ask his fellow country men and women to “thank the Lord / And resume the true fight we abandoned years ago” (1998: 61). The fight here is the struggle for human rights and dignity, for a good life free from oppression and exploitation that Banda derailed and betrayed after independence. For him this fight will have to begin by “singing in the native tongues the old / Guards cut under the pretext of building [the nation]” (1998: 61). The fight that needs to be resumed here is the struggle for freedoms which Banda suppressed during his reign. The native tongues that were cut on the other hand are the local languages that were suppressed in favour of Chichewa, Banda’s mother tongue, allegedly to foster unity amongst the diverse tribes in Malawi. The reason offered at the time for favouring Chichewa over any of the other languages was that Chichewa was spoken by a majority of Malawians. But this assertion was challenged by Professor Wilfred Whiteley from the University of London who “observed in a report for the University of Malawi that the number of Chewa speakers was clearly exaggerated in official estimates” (Africa Watch 1990: 57–58). As a result Dr. Banda ordered that Whiteley’s services should no longer be used in the University of Malawi. The fact that Mapanje is concerned about Malawi’s minority languages comes as no surprise as, besides being a well-known poet, he is also a distinguished linguist.

In the poem “Just Another Jehovah’s Witness” (1998: 62–63), we see Banda’s wickedness as a lion in his persecution of members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, in the 1970s. The Jehovah’s Witnesses refused to join any political party and to buy the Malawi Congress Party card which every adult Malawian – and later even babies in arms – was supposed to have. As a result of their refusal they were persecuted by the various vigilante groups of the MCP who drove thousands of them into exile in neighbouring countries (Mozambique and Zambia) and killed several others. Sadly, some of the exiles were sent back, by the governments of the countries in which they sought asylum, to Malawi where they faced more harassment. The poem, the poet tells us, is a family history inspired by the sudden death from stroke of the poet’s brother-in-law, Ibrahim Nyalenda, (the addressee in the poem) who was a Jehovah’s Witness (1998: 78). Recalling the message about

the death of the in-law, who chose to be buried in Malawi rather than in exile, Mapanje writes:

The telephone message declared
you were rested below the mountain range
that splits my father's land from my village of birth
I gather you refused refuge
among the Swazi confreres who had
plucked you from the fangs of our life serpent (1998: 62)

Further, writing in a way that highlights the plight of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi and the ruthlessness of Banda, Mapanje says:

You were just another frog of a Jehovah's Witness
sentenced to the squalid life of Fort Mlangeni
Concentration Camp and Dzeleka Prison chambers
imposed by our lion-for-life (1998: 62)

In the poem Banda is referred to as "our lion-for-life," or simply as "our lion" and more tellingly as "our life serpent" to emphasize his viciousness, deceit and failure to provide Malawians with the freedom they fought for in the struggle for independence. The news of the in-law's death triggers memories of the nice times the poet spent together with him and the suffering that the in-law went through in the hands of Banda and his MCP. Banda's regime is blamed in the poem for contributing to Nyalenda's stroke that later killed him as we hear the poet declare

Your stroke began when the MCP red-shirts⁷
Impounded the sweat of the house you built
Opposite Chikoko Bay charging you, 'These
Jehovah's Witnesses despise His Excellency's
Malawi Congress Party cards, badges...'
As they took home your beds, mattresses, pans... (1998: 62)

Besides losing property the addressee had also suffered other terrible things such as imprisonment at Fort Mlangeni and Dzeleka where he experienced horrors he swore never to divulge to his relations, "howling / 'The horrors this tyrant has loaded over / us I will chant among strangers far away'" (1998: 63). What emerges from the poems discussed above and others is the fact that, in his representation of the lion, which stands for Banda in the poetry, Mapanje focuses on the negative attributes associated with the animal: the lion's cruelty, brutality and viciousness. Given the emotional force and "value-laden and ideologically attitudinal" (Goatly 2006: 15–16) nature of pejorative animal metaphors for humans, in using them Mapanje structures and influences in us a

⁷ Youth Leaguers.

negative attitude towards Banda who needed to be removed from power to pave way for a democratic political dispensation.

4. BANDA’S AGENTS AS VICIOUS CREATURES AND VERMIN

Furthermore, Mapanje’s use of animal metaphors to stereotype and inferiorise some individuals in society and to highlight their brutality and evil is also clear in his reference to Banda’s cohorts (agents, informers, interrogators, abductors, torturers, killers, among others) as crocodiles, vipers, cockroaches and scorpions, among other animals.

The poet describes the murder of Dunduzu Chisiza, Henry Masauko Chipembere, Aaron Gadama, and Dick Matenje (called Du, Chip, Aaron and Dick in the poem) and others as being “Plucked early by the crocodiles of the despot’s heydays” in “On His Life Excellency’s House Arrest” (1998: 59). The crocodiles here are the death squads, members of the Special Branch, and the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) who were behind many political murders in those days. Dunduzu Chisiza, the first Secretary General of Banda’s MCP died in September 1962 ostensibly in a car accident at Thondwe Bridge on the Zomba – Blantyre road. Some critics of Banda suspect, however, that Chisiza was murdered (see Power 1998). Henry Masauko Chipembere died in 1975 under mysterious circumstances in the USA where he had fled to in 1965 after an unsuccessful insurrection against Banda. Aaron Gadama and Dick Matenje on the other hand are some of the four prominent politicians (who include Twaibu Sangala and David Chiwanga) murdered by police in 1983.⁸

Further reference to the brutal forces of the MCP machinery and their members as crocodiles is also noticeable in the poem “Beginning Where We Left Off” (1998: 61). In this poem these forces are called “deadly crocodiles,” “puff-adders and scorpions” (1998: 61). In the poem the poet suggests that now that members of these forces are submissive to the new post-Banda regime, the formerly oppressed people “must ... gather ... / To pour libation on flaming ancestral rocks,” (1998: 61) in gratitude to the ancestors for removing the people’s yoke that was MCP. In calling the oppressors “deadly crocodiles,” “puff-adders” and “scorpions,” the poet emphasises their viciousness and the

⁸ The rise of Bakili Muluzi and his UDF party to power in 1994 saw the formation of a commission of inquiry in 1995 to look into the circumstances surrounding the death of Aaron Gadama, Dick Matenje, Twaibu Sangala and David Chiwanga who the old republic claimed had died in a car accident in Mwanza while fleeing the country. The commission established that the men had been murdered by police on orders from above. Dr Banda, John Tembo and Cecilia Kadzamira were arrested and tried for conspiracy to murder. During the subsequent hearings, “some members of the police force admitted using hammers and other objects to kill the politicians, after which they loaded their corpses in a car and rolled it over a cliff to simulate a car accident.” The trio was acquitted in 1996 for lack of enough evidence (Muluzi et. al. 1999: 132).

excruciating pain they caused to their victims through murder, detentions and torture. The poet here associates the victimisers with crocodiles that are known for killing people particularly in the Lower Shire, puff-adders which are some of the most poisonous snakes in the world, and scorpions whose painful stings the poet compares to a brain tumour in the poem “The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison” (1993: 48–52). Like in “Beginning Where We Left Off,” Banda’s supporters are also referred to as snakes in “Rested Amongst Fellow Hyenas, Finally” (2004: 198–199); “Another Clan of Road-fated Shrews” (1998: 28); and in “The Vipers that Minute Our Twitches” (1998: 29–30). A snake is one of the most hated creatures on earth. The harm it inflicts on humans and other animals through its bite and the association of it with treachery in the Bible’s book of Genesis have contributed to its bad reputation. In the above poems Mapanje exploits the negative attributes of the snake in associating the people who committed atrocities in the name of Banda and the MCP with it. In “Rested Amongst Fellow Hyenas, Finally” the poet wonders whether the snakes (Banda’s followers) spat “in disbelief as / [Banda’s] flywhisk which swiped their // Laughter shut was placed on / His right” in his coffin (2004: 198). The vipers in “The Vipers that Minute Our Twitches” are no doubt members of the Special Branch or MYP who were known to track people so as to uncover their supposed plots against the regime.⁹ In this poem Mapanje’s relatives had gathered courage to go and see him and his family off, on August 17, 1991, at Lilongwe International Airport on their way into exile. This courage, however, leaves the poet wondering for how long would his family and friends be under surveillance of the MCP agents (MYP and Special Branch) after he is gone when he asks: “And how long, Lord, will the vipers / Minute every twitch, laughter and tone of voice / Made by those sending off this rebel family?” (1998: 30).

Like in “Beginning Where We Left Off” we see a clear identification of crocodiles with Banda’s minions in “A Million Ways of Re-burying a Despot” (2007: 22). In this poem the poet questions the wisdom in spending huge sums of money by government on the construction of a mausoleum for a despot, Banda, when there are a million ways of re-burying him.¹⁰ One such way, according to the poet, is to bury him in a contraption of

grass, reed, bamboos, a puddle of a grave like
the ones his crocodiles dug for his presumed
political enemies (2007: 22)

The poet goes on to argue that if the construction of the mausoleum was a question of disposing of Banda’s millions, then there were nobler ways of doing so “that don’t need a mausoleum” considering that “his crocodiles” gathered

⁹ The Malawian poet Anthony Nazombe satirises and ridicules this practice in his poem “Guardian Fly” (1984: 35), a corruption of the Christian notion of guardian angel.

¹⁰ Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, the second president of the post-Banda era in Malawian politics, unveiled a mausoleum at Banda’s grave in the state’s capital Lilongwe on May 14, 2006.

those millions “from people’s loin-cloth purses they forced as / ‘presents for your Life President!’ at his mass //rallies[.]” (2007: 22).¹¹ We also see similar reference to Banda’s hangers-on in “Silences Surrounding Mama’s Unfinished City Flats” (2007: 17-18) where reference is made to “His Excellency the Life / President and his crocodiles” (2007: 17). However the reference here could be literal or metaphorical since Banda is alleged to have reared crocodiles at one of his palaces to whom he fed some of his political enemies. Some of the enemies, Banda publicly claimed, were fed to crocodiles in the River Shire. Mapanje exploits this belief in “Where Dissent is Meat for Crocodiles” (1993: 80–81) where he warns his “brethren in dissent” that they “Are out of bounds, Meat for crocodiles” (1993: 80). As Nazombe (1995: 148) observes, Mapanje here “echoes a threat issued in public to his political opponents by president Banda.” For Thandika Mkandawire (1994: 17), the leadership’s priding itself “of keeping the crocodiles of the Shire River well-fed with corpses of [...] opponents” shows how much human life was devalued in the political culture of the time.

Moreover, Banda’s adherents are also referred to as cockroaches and leeches in “Re-entering the Shrines of Zomba” (1981: 43), as squirrels and cockroaches in “Nor Will I Believe the Glorious Retreat” (1981: 72), and as cockroaches and vipers in “Another Clan of Road-fated Shrews” (1998: 28). The behaviour of these people is likened to that of vermin and bothersome or vexing creatures. The squirrels and cockroaches are said to gnaw at precious nerves of people in “Nor Will I Believe the Glorious Retreat” (1981: 72). The fact that Banda’s devotees were a nuisance is clear in the poem “Another Clan of Road-fated Shrews” where the poet is convinced that

the cockroaches that
Snuffed the radiant hue of our calabashes
And crashed on the walls of our prisons cells
Where their shadow tracked us down (1998: 28)

have not disappeared with the advent of multipartyism in Malawi. Like the fly in the Malawian writer Anthony Nazombe’s poem, “Guardian Fly” (1984: 35), the cockroaches and vipers here track people down, even while in prison.

One notices that the animals Mapanje chooses to represent as metaphors for the people who sowed seeds of violence, suffering and death during the First Republic either are perceived as possessing only negative traits or have a negative relationship with humans, that is, they are considered ignoble and dangerous animals (such as hyenas, leopards, lions, crocodiles and snakes), or pests and vermin such as squirrels, cockroaches, scorpions and leeches. The poet

¹¹ Whenever Banda was due to address a rally, members of the Youth League went about in villages forcing people to make contributions in cash and in kind which would then be announced at the rally as gifts by the people to their president in gratitude for his good and wise leadership. But some of these “gifts” seldom reached Dr. Banda. The Area Chairmen (they were always men) of the party and Youth Leaguers extorted these “gifts” from the people in the name of Banda to satisfy their personal needs.

lumps the otherwise harmless squirrel amongst pests and vermin, associating its foraging behaviour and gnawing trait with pain and suffering. Here again Mapanje contests the view that Banda and the MCP's were custodians of unity, peace, obedience, and discipline, the four cornerstones of Banda's leadership. Instead, Mapanje casts them as despoilers of the peace that the four cornerstones were supposed to ensure in the country.

5. ANIMALS AS WEAPONS OF SATIRE, RIDICULE AND SCORN

Apart from employing animal imagery to expose the viciousness, brutality and evil of president Hastings Kamuzu Banda and his followers and thereby calling for and justifying their overthrow and replacement, Mapanje also uses pejorative animal metaphors for banter: satirising, ridiculing and scorning the president and his adherents as well as other members of the Malawian society whose behaviour invites such treatment. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o observes:

Satire takes for its province a whole society, and for its purpose, criticism. The satirist sets himself certain standards and criticizes society when and where it departs from these norms. He invites us to assume his standards and share the moral indignation which moves him to pour derision and ridicule on society's failings. He corrects through painful, sometimes malicious, laughter (1972: 55; see also Greenblatt 1974: 103).

Mapanje's poetic and allegorical form, tone, word choice, and rhetorical questions reveal his "moral indignation" and his "derision and ridicule on society's failings" which he attempts to correct through satiric humour and interrogation. Although Mapanje satirises his society as a whole, his most biting satire is reserved for those in power and those who support them. Through his satire Mapanje seeks to expose the folly and stupidity of the politicians and their supporters as well as his contempt and disdain for them. One animal which is a favourite as a vehicle for this revulsion and contempt is the hyena.

A hyena is the animal that plays the role of a dupe in many Malawian folk stories. Steve Chimombo observes that "in Malawian folk narratives, *Fisi* [hyena] has never been depicted triumphant" (1988: 180). It is often portrayed as dull, stupid, and cowardly. In real life the animal is generally viewed in Malawi with a mixture of fear, contempt and disgust, and is often ridiculed and mocked for its eating habits, nocturnal behaviour, and ungainly gait. A hyena is seen as a coward and a filthy animal. It is perhaps this association of the hyena with filth that a man who is asked to help cleanse a woman who is considered unclean for various reasons through sexual contact is called *fisi*. Ironically, the hyena is also associated with potency. It is this potency or the nocturnal behaviour of a hyena that is exploited in traditional parlance where a man whose sexual services are requested in private to help father a child for a man who is failing to do so with his wife is called *fisi*. Like a hyena which comes to the

village at night to steal livestock, a man whose sexual services are needed by a childless couple performs his duties under the cover of darkness. However, some parts of the hyena’s anatomy are highly prized for their use in magic mostly by people who wish to unleash evil on society such as witches and wizards, and thieves. Its brain, nose, ears, tail, toes and other body parts often disappear as soon as a dead hyena is discovered. Popular belief also has it that some hyenas are owned by witches and wizards who use them as their familiars. In Mapanje’s poetry, no animal carries his satire and contempt for the oppressor and his minions better than this animal that has “suggested all that is immoral to humans, symbolizing a range of negative character traits from avarice to malice to stupidity” in African oral literature (Gottlieb 1986: 477).

In the poem “Rested Amongst Fellow Hyenas, Finally” (2004: 198–199), the poet lampoons Banda by calling him a hyena, thereby deconstructing the popularly held view that Banda was the lion of Malawi, in which case he was supposed to be brave, and strong. However, Banda’s constant ranting against his enemies and his paranoid fear of rebellion undermined his bravery, and his old age left him weak rather than strong as his henchpersons would have Malawians believe. For the poet, therefore, Banda was no less a hyena (stupid, contemptible and cowardly) as those he used to “ridicule / at political rallies” (2004: 198). The tone in the poem is full of sardonic humour as the poet, using his trademark conversational style and rhetorical questions, wishes to know what happened during Banda’s funeral:

Did
The woodpeckers, squirrels, cats
And snakes spit in disbelief as
The fly whisk which swiped their

Laughter shut was placed on
His right – lest another mosquito
Zang past to upset his eternal
Glory? (2004: 198)

And again
What welcome did
His Young Pioneer invented rebels
Give him on arrival? Did they ask
How it felt to be finally there, alone? (2004: 199)

Mapanje achieves satiric humour through, among other things, the use of descriptive phrases and expressions that depict the thing or person described as ridiculous and stupid. Banda’s failure to interfere in or influence events surrounding the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin wall invites “derision and ridicule” as he is referred to as a “battered hyena” who fails “to crack / Rotten bones in the dustbins of East / /Versus West” (1993: 96) in “The

Deluge After Our Gweru Prison Dreams” (1993: 95–98). As Nazombe (1995: 135) clearly states, “at least two important [...] events” led to “the dramatic social and political changes” that took place in Malawi in the 1990s. These events were

the collapse of Communism in the Eastern bloc countries of Europe in 1989 and the publication early in March 1992 of the Malawian Catholic bishops’ pastoral letter, *Living Our Faith*. The shift of focus among capitalist nations from fighting Communism to building and strengthening democracy in the world shocked their erstwhile Third World ideological allies, including the despotic Malawi Congress Party regime in Malawi. (Ibid.)

The expression “battered hyena” in the poem evokes the old age, frailty and helplessness of Banda who was in his nineties when he lost power in 1994, while the nearly oxymoronic phrase “to crack / Rotten bones” also evokes Banda’s weakness and helplessness. The choice of a hyena (an animal endowed with the most powerful jaws in the animal kingdom which, nevertheless, fails to “crack / Rotten bones”) to allegorise the aged Banda also aptly depicts Banda’s frailty. Mapanje’s choice of descriptive phrases and expressions in this poem paint a picture of an old, frail and helpless Banda who greedily maintains his hold on power. It is no surprise then that the poet calls on the “Youths to dance” and “take // The arena” (1993: 96) – in other words, take over power.

In the poem “For Another Village Politburo Projected” (1993: 11) Mapanje describes Banda as a “squirrel in kinked flywhisks, / Flashing [his] nausea” and parodies him as a hyena “with the guilt of our skulls behind” him (1993: 11). These allegorical and satiric descriptions evoke contrasting images of Banda. In the first description Banda emerges as opportunistic and stupid while in the second he comes across as murderous and evil. In allegorising Banda as a squirrel Mapanje focuses on Banda’s greed, old age and weakness while in characterising him as a hyena he shifts his focus to Banda’s despotism and ruthlessness. Banda’s callousness is underscored by the expression “guilt of our skulls” which refers to his track-record of evil which included politically motivated murder. The satire here is meant to puncture the heroic image of Banda and the ideology of Kamuzuism that the image inspired.

Like the hyena the vulture also acts as a term of scorn for the police or security forces that help despots cling on to power by abusing other citizens. We encounter this in the poem “Warm Thoughts for Ken Saro-Wiwa” (1998: 46) where the forces who abducted him following directives from Sani Abacha are called “The armed vultures” (1998: 46). Ken Saro-Wiwa was a Nigerian author, television producer, environmental activist and president of the [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People](#) (MOSOP) who was hanged by the dictatorial military regime of Sani Abacha in 1995. By calling the armed forces “armed vultures” Mapanje is characterizing them as contemptuous and hideous.

Further, Mapanje employs self-irony and mockery as a survival strategy after the shocking sudden reversal of fortunes from a respected linguist, poet and head of an academic department at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, to a despicable prisoner in Mikuyu. He therefore scornfully refers to himself and fellow prisoners as dung-beetles to suppress the grim reality that confronts him. In “Scrubbing the Furious Walls of Mikuyu” (1993: 53–54) the thunderstruck Mapanje who has been ordered to clean the graffiti-riddled walls of a cell in Mikuyu ponders:

Is this where they dump those rebels,
these haggard cells stinking of bucket
shit and vomit and the acrid urine of
yesteryears? (1993: 53)

The word “dump” suggests that the alleged rebels are trash or refuse to be disposed of from society, while the personification of the prison cells through the use of the word “haggard” underscores the unsuitability of the cells for human habitation. The scatological imagery in the above lines also emphasises the squalid conditions of Mikuyu prison cells where political prisoners were condemned to spend their lives. Casting doubt on whether anybody could have foreseen the possibility of his detention in Mikuyu the poet wonders:

Who would have thought I
would be gazing at these dusty, cobweb
ceilings of Mikuyu Prison, scrubbing
briny walls and riddling out impetuous
scratches of another dung-beetle locked
up before me here? (1993: 53)

The phrase “another dung-beetle locked / up before me” gives the impression that the poet sees himself as yet another dung-beetle. The dung-beetle is yet another creature whose station in life is considered lowly and despicable – pushing around faeces day in and day out. The poet then proceeds to hint at the anger of the previous detainees by pointing where “Violent human palms / wounded ... blood-bloated mosquitoes / and bugs (to survive), leaving vicious / red marks” (1993: 53). Mapanje’s choice of words such as “violent,” “wounded,” “blood-bloated,” and “vicious” here underscores not only the anger and violence of the former occupant of the prison cell, but also the violence and ruthlessness of the regime that condemned harmless citizens to squalid prison cells where they fell victim to disease-carrying mosquitoes and bugs. In the end the poet decides to abandon his task to avoid being party to the liquidation of “too many / brave names out of the nation’s memory” (1993: 54). It could also be argued that by referring to himself and other Mikuyu prisoners as dung-beetles he is adopting the perspective of his incarcerators who see the prisoners as scornful and despicable creatures for allegedly rebelling against their wise leader, Banda.

6. CONCLUSION

Jack Mapanje's poetry as discussed above demonstrates the crucial role animals play in literature. As the discussion shows, animal imagery provides Mapanje "with a rich set of possibilities for constructing meaning, and for commenting about" the social and political situation in Banda's Malawi (Howard and Rensel 1991: np). Mapanje adopts "metaphorical strategies" in his poetry to characterize Banda, the oppressor, and his agents "through animal imagery in order to convey a sense of their [moral] distance, strangeness and difference" (Baker 1993: 108) considering that, as Kate Soper (2005: 307) observes, "in animals we discover our own loathsome and most laudable qualities, projecting on to them both that with which we most closely identify, and that which we are most keen to be distanced from." In using animals as a discursive weapon in his response to Banda's autocracy, Mapanje inferiorises the leader and his followers and exposes their evil and brutality. He also satirises, mocks, and ridicules them as stupid and cowardly. The discussion has also revealed Mapanje's careful choice of words, images and expressions to express his anger and disillusionment with Banda's Malawi Congress Party regime. The poet's choice and use of animal metaphors and images as discussed above justify Reuben Chirambo's (1998) reference to his poetry as poetry for democracy in Malawi. Banda and his henchpersons had failed their mandate and needed to be booted out of power. It had become obvious to many that the MCP ideology of Kamuzuism was a myth hyped by greedy and bloodthirsty politicians who, instead of helping the people attain freedom and prosperity denied them during the colonial era, unleashed a reign of terror and subjected the citizenry to misery and suffering.

REFERENCES

- Africa Watch. 1990.
Where Silence Rules: The Suppression of Dissent in Malawi. London and New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Baker, Steve. 1993.
Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bunting, Chris. 2000.
"Behind Bars, then Out in the Cold." *Times Higher Education Supplement*. Accessed on February 20, 2009.
<<http://chrisbunting3.blogspot.com/2007/07/behind-bars-then-out-in-cold.html>>
- Chimombo, Steve. 1988.
Malawian Oral Literature: The Aesthetics of Indigenous Arts. Zomba: Centre for Social Research.

- Chirambo, Reuben Makayiko. 2007a
Orality and Subversion in Jack Mapanje’s Of Chameleons and Gods. International Fiction Review 34 (1–2): 79–91.
- 2007b *Subverting Banda’s Dictatorship in Malawi: Orality as Counter-discourse in Jack Mapanje’s Of Chameleon and Gods. ARIEL* 38 (2–3): 139–157.
- 2005 *Culture, Hegemony, and Dictatorship in Malawi: Song, Dance, and Politics in Malawi, 1964–1994*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota.
- 2004 ‘Operation Bwezani’: *The Army, Political Change, and Dr. Banda’s Hegemony in Malawi. Nordic Journal of African Studies* 13(2): 146–163.
- 1998 *Poetry for Democracy in Malawi. Southern Review* 11(3): 16–21.
- Gibbs, James. 1988.
Singing in the Dark Rain. Index on Censorship 17(2): 18–22.
- Goatly, Andrew. 2006.
Humans, Animals, and Metaphors. Society & Animals 14(1): 15–37.
Accessed on April 21, 2011.
<http://www.animalsandsociety.org/assets/library/594_sa1414.pdf>
- Gottlieb, Alma. 1986.
Dog: Ally or Traitor? Mythology, Cosmology, and Society among the Beng of Ivory Coast. American Ethnologist 13(3): 477–488.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 1974.
“Orwell as Satirist.” In: Raymond Williams (ed.), *George Orwell: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 103–118. Englewood Cliffs, N. J: Prentice-Hall.
- Howard, Alan and Jan Rensel. 1991.
Animals as Metaphors in Rotuman Sayings. Accessed on April 21, 2011. <<http://www.rotuma.net/os/howsel/17animals.html>>
- Malawi High Court. 1995–96.
The Republic versus Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda and Others. Unpublished Report, Malawiana, Chancellor College Library, University of Malawi.
- Mapanje, Jack. 2007.
Beasts of Nalunga. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books.
- 2004 *The Last of the Sweet Bananas: New and Selected Poetry*. Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books.
- 1998 *Skipping Without Ropes*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books.
- 1997c “Of Orality and Memory in Prison and Exile (A Personal Note on How to Survive the Chaos of Incarceration).” In: Kofi Anyidoho (ed.), *The Word Behind Bars and the Paradox of Exile*, pp. 19–45. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

- 1997b “The Changing Fortunes of the Writer in Africa?” In: Mpalive-Hangson Msiska and Paul Hyland (eds.), *Writing and Africa*, pp. 216–233. Harlow, Essex: Addison Wesley Longman.
- 1997a “Containing Cockroaches (Memories of Incarceration Reconstructed in Exile).” In: Kofi Anyidoho (ed.), *The Word Behind Bars and the Paradox of Exile*, pp. 46–79. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- 1993 *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- 1989 *Censoring the African Poem*. **Index on Censorship** 18(9): 7–11.
- 1981 *Of Chameleon and Gods*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- 1975 *The Use of Traditional Literary Forms in Modern Malawian Writing in English*. Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, University of London.
- Mkandawire, Thandika. 1994.
A Kind of Homecoming. **SAPEM**: 13–18.
- Moto, Francis. 2001.
Trends in Malawian Literature. Zomba: Chancellor College.
- Mthatiwa, Syned. 2009.
Bird Metaphors in Jack Mapanje’s The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison and Skipping Without Ropes. **Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa** 16(2): 13–34.
- Muluzi, Bakili et. al. 1999.
Democracy with a Price: The History of Malawi since 1900. Blantyre: Jhango Heinemann.
- Nazombe, Anthony. 1995.
“Malawian Poetry of the Transition: Steve Chimombo’s ‘A Referendum of the Forest Creatures’ and Jack Mapanje’s ‘The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison’.” In: Matembo S. Nzunda and Kenneth R. Ross (eds.), *Church, Law and Political Transition in Malawi 1992–94*, pp. 135–152. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.
- 1984 “Guardian Fly.” In: Anthony Nazombe, *No Dreams Here and Other Poems*, pp. 35. Unpublished Poetry Collection. Malawiana, Chancellor College Library, University of Malawi, 35.
- Ndebele, Njabulo S. 2007.
“The Year of the Dog: A Journey of the Imagination.” In: Njabulo S. Ndebele, *Fine Lines from the Box: Further Thoughts about Our Country*, compiled by Sam Raditlhalo, pp. 251–256. Roggebaai, Cape Town: Umuzi.

- Phiri, Kings. 2000.
A Case of Revolutionary Change in Contemporary Malawi: The Malawi Army and the Disarming of the Malawi Young Pioneers. Journal of Peace, Conflict and Military Studies 1(1): n.p. Accessed on February 27, 2009.
<<http://www.uz.ac.zw/units/cds/journals/volume1/number1/article3.html>>
- Power, Joey. 1998.
Remembering Du: An Episode in the Development of Malawian Political Culture. African Affairs 97(388): 369–396.
- Rodriguez, Irene López. 2009.
Of Women, Bitches, Chickens and Vixens: Animal Metaphors for Women in English and Spanish. Culture, Language and Representation 7: 77–100.
- Schoffeleers, Matthew. 1999.
In Search of Truth and Justice: Confrontation between Church and State in Malawi 1960–1994. Blantyre: CLAIM.
- Soper, Kate. 2005.
“The Beast in Literature: Some Initial Thoughts.” *Literary Beasts: The Representation of Animals in Contemporary Literature. Comparative Critical Studies* 2(3): 303–309.
- Uledi-Kamanga, Brighton J. 1998.
The Symbolism of Bondage and Freedom in Jack Mapanje’s ‘The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison’. **Tizame** 6: 41–53.
- Wa Thiong’o, Ngugi. 2006.
“Open Criticism Is Very Healthy in Any Society.” Interview with John Esibi. In: *Ngugi wa Thiong’o Speaks: Interviews Edited By Reinhard Sander and Bernth Lindfors*, pp. 77–83. Oxford: James Currey.
- 1972 “Wole Soyinka, T. M. Aluko and the Satiric Voice.” In: Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*, pp. 55–66. London: Heinemann.
- Zezeza, Tiyambe. 1996.
Banishing Words and Stories: Censorship in Banda’s Malawi. CODESRIA Bulletin 1: 10–15.

About the author: *Syned Mthatiwa* is a literary scholar and fiction writer who teaches Literature at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. He holds BA and MA degrees from the University of Malawi, and a PhD from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Mthatiwa’s research interest is in Ecocriticism or ecophilosophy more generally, postcolonial literary and cultural studies, oral literature, poetry and the novel. He has published several journal articles on African Literature.