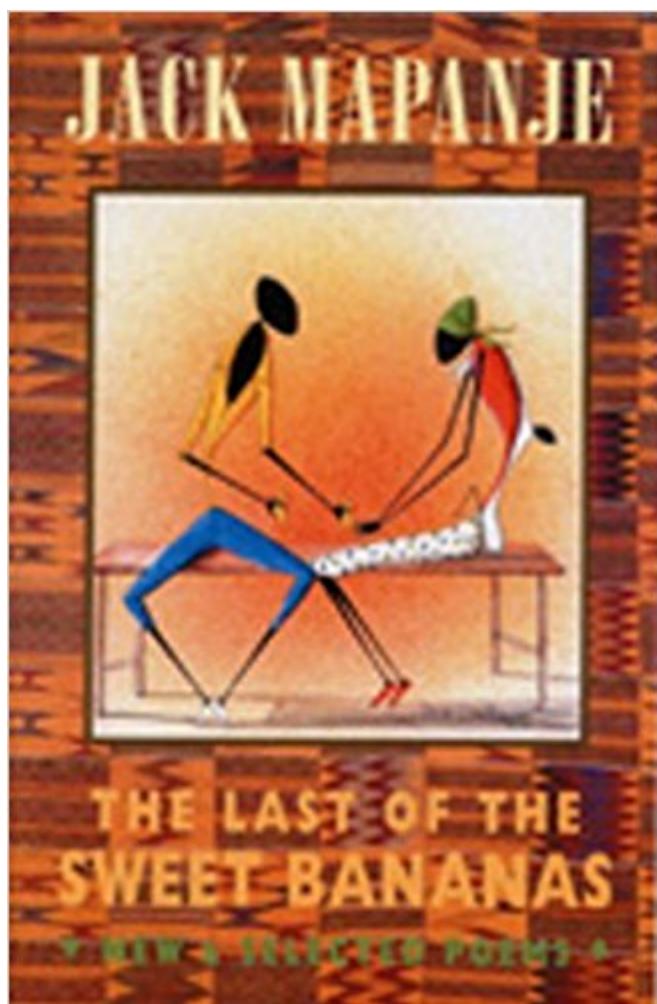


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The Last Of The Sweet Bananas: New And Selected Poems



Synopsis

Because he was a radical poet-his first book of poems was banned-Jack Mapanje was imprisoned without trial or charge by the dictator Hastings Banda of Malawi for nearly four years. The themes of his poetry range from the search for a sense of dignity and integrity under a repressive regime, incarceration, release from prison, exile and return to Africa, and reconciliation with torturers, to the writer in Africa and the continuing African liberation struggle in a hostile world. His poems are lifted up by a generosity of spirit and irrepressible humor that helped sustain him through his prison ordeal.

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Customer Reviews

"Jack Mapanje's early poems, written under Banda's dictatorship, had to be cryptic. Poems written in prison and published after his release were, necessarily, very angry. His latest work is mellow and more mordant in tone. But the conscience, the wit and the craftsmanship which it displays have characterised his work from the beginning. His wholly original, unsubdued voice is still unlike that of any other poet writing in English, from Africa or anywhere' - Angus Calder; 'The poems have a raging clarity; the chameleon has become the chattering wagtail...Don't read this because Mapanje was detained, another human rights victim. Read it because he made poetry out of the experience - sardonic, inventive, lyrical testimonies to a generous and enduring spirit' - Landeg White, Stand; 'Given the regime, Mapanje's satire can seem strangely generous, impressively blending the memory of terror with a sense almost of farce when he considers his captors' - Sean O'Brien, Sunday Times; 'An African talent whose poetry effectively overthrew the dictator' - David Rubadiri,

Jack Mapanje is a poet, linguist, editor and human rights activist. He received the 1988 Rotterdam Poetry International Award for his first book of poems, *Chameleons and Gods* (1981) and the USA's Fonlon-Nichols Award for his contribution to poetry and human rights. He was head of the Department of English at the University of Malawi when the Malawi authorities arrested in 1987 after his first book of poems was banned, and he was released in 1991 after spending three years, seven months and sixteen days in prison, following an international outcry against his incarceration. He published two further collections, *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* (1993) and *Skipping Without Ropes* (Bloodaxe, 1998), as well as three anthologies, *Oral Poetry from Africa* (1983), *Summer Fires: New Poetry of Africa* (1983) and *The African Writers' Handbook* (1999); and he edited the acclaimed *Gathering Seaweed: African Prison Writing* (2002). Mapanje has held residences in the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland and throughout Britain, running poetry workshops in prisons, schools, libraries, colleges and universities. Most recently he was poet in residence with the Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Cumbria. He lives in exile in York with his family; and is currently teaching at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

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