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LIGNE EDITORIALE DE *PARTICIP'ACTION*

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Une courte présentation en note de bas de page des auteurs (es) ne devant pas dépasser 100 mots par auteur. On doit y retrouver obligatoirement le nom de l'auteur, le nom de l'institution d'origine, le statut professionnel et l'organisation dont il relève, et enfin, les adresses de courrier électronique du ou des auteurs. L'auteur peut aussi énumérer ses principaux champs de recherche et ses principales publications. La revue ne s'engage toutefois pas à diffuser tous ces éléments.

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-La structure d'un article, doit être conforme aux règles de rédaction scientifique, selon que l'article est une contribution théorique ou résulte d'une recherche de terrain.

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Titre,

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Résumé en français. Mots-clés, Abstract, Keywords,

Introduction, Méthodologie, Résultats et Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

Par exemple : Les articles conformes aux normes de présentation, doivent contenir les rubriques suivantes : introduction, problématique de l'étude, méthodologie adoptée, résultats de la recherche, perspectives pour recherche, conclusions, références bibliographiques.

Tout l'article ne doit dépasser 17 pages,

Police Times new roman, taille 12 et interligne 1,5 (maximum 30 000 mots). La revue *Particip'Action* permet l'usage de notes de bas de page pour ajouter des précisions au texte. Mais afin de ne pas alourdir la lecture et d'aller à l'essentiel, il est recommandé de **faire le moins possible usage des notes (10 notes de bas de page au maximum par article).**

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Les passages cités sont présentés en romain et entre guillemets. Lorsque la phrase citant et la citation dépassent trois lignes, il faut aller à la ligne, pour présenter la citation (interligne 1) en romain et en retrait, en diminuant la taille de police d'un point. Insérer la pagination et ne pas insérer d'information autre que le numéro de page dans l'en-tête et éviter les pieds de page.

Les figures et les tableaux doivent être intégrés au texte et présentés avec des marges d'au moins six centimètres à droite et à gauche. Les caractères dans ces figures et tableaux doivent aussi être en Times 12. Figures et tableaux doivent avoir chacun(e) un titre.

Les citations dans le corps du texte doivent être indiquées par un retrait avec tabulation 1 cm et le texte mis en taille 11.

Les références de citations sont intégrées au texte citant, selon les cas, de la façon suivante :

- (Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur, année de publication, pages citées) ; - Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur (année de publication, pages citées). Exemples :

- En effet, le but poursuivi par **M. Ascher (1998, p. 223)**, est « d'élargir l'histoire des mathématiques de telle sorte qu'elle acquière une perspective multiculturelle et globale (...), d'accroître le domaine des mathématiques : alors qu'elle s'est pour l'essentiel occupée du groupe professionnel occidental que l'on appelle les mathématiciens (...) ».

- Pour dire plus amplement ce qu'est cette capacité de la société civile, qui dans son déploiement effectif, atteste qu'elle peut porter le développement et l'histoire, S. B. Diagne (1991, p. 2) écrit :

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : de toute manière, les populations ont toujours su opposer à la philosophie de l'encadrement et à son volontarisme leurs propres stratégies de contournements. Celles-là, par exemple, sont lisibles dans le dynamisme, ou à tout le moins, dans la créativité dont sait preuve ce que l'on désigne sous le nom de secteur informel et à qui il faudra donner l'appellation positive d'économie populaire.

- Le philosophe ivoirien a raison, dans une certaine mesure, de lire, dans ce choc déstabilisateur, le processus du sous-développement. Ainsi qu'il le dit :

le processus du sous-développement résultant de ce choc est vécu concrètement par les populations concernées comme une crise globale : crise socio-économique (exploitation brutale, chômage permanent, exode accéléré et douloureux), mais aussi crise socio-culturelle et de civilisation traduisant une impréparation sociohistorique et une inadaptation des cultures et des comportements humains aux formes de vie imposées par les technologies étrangères. (S. Diakité, 1985, p. 105).

Pour les articles de deux ou trois auteurs, noter les initiales des prénoms, les noms et suivis de l'année (J. Batee et D. Maate, 2004 ou K. Moote, A. Pooul et E. Polim, 2000). Pour les articles ou ouvrages collectifs de plus de trois auteurs noter les initiales des prénoms, le nom du premier auteur et la mention "et al" (F. Loom et al, 2003). Lorsque plusieurs références sont utilisées pour la même information, celles-ci doivent être mises en ordre chronologique (R. Gool, 1998 et M. Goti, 2006).

Les sources historiques, les références d'informations orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page.

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Les divers éléments d'une référence bibliographique sont présentés comme suit : NOM et Prénom (s) de l'auteur, Année de publication, Zone titre, Lieu de publication, Zone Editeur, pages (p.) occupées par l'article dans la revue ou l'ouvrage collectif.

Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté en romain et entre guillemets, celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une revue ou d'un journal est présenté en italique. Dans la zone Editeur, on indique la Maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas où un ouvrage est une traduction et/ou une réédition, il faut préciser après le titre le nom du traducteur et/ou l'édition (ex : 2^{de} éd.).

Ne sont présentées dans les références bibliographiques que les références des documents cités. Les références bibliographiques sont présentées par ordre alphabétique des noms d'auteur. Il convient de prêter une attention particulière à la qualité de l'expression. Le Comité scientifique de la revue se réserve le droit de réviser les textes, de demander des modifications (mineures ou majeures) ou de rejeter l'article de manière définitive ou provisoire (si des corrections majeures doivent préalablement y être apportées). L'auteur est consulté préalablement à la diffusion de son article lorsque le Comité scientifique apporte des modifications. Si les corrections ne sont pas prises en compte par l'auteur, la direction de la revue *Particip'Action* se donne le droit de ne pas publier l'article.

AMIN Samir, 1996, *Les défis de la mondialisation*, Paris, Le Harmattan.

AUDARD Cathérine, 2009, *Qu'est-ce que le libéralisme ? Ethique, politique, société*, Paris, Gallimard.

BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.

DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », *Diogenes*, 202, p. 145-151.

DIAKITE Sidiki, 1985, *Violence technologique et développement. La question africaine du développement*, Paris, Le Harmattan.

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NB2 : La quête philosophique centrale de la revue *Particip'Action* reste : **Fluidité identitaire et construction du changement : approches pluri-et/ou transdisciplinaires.**

Les auteurs qui souhaitent se faire publier dans nos colonnes sont priés d'avoir cette philosophie comme fil directeur de leur réflexion.

La Rédaction

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**ARTICULATING CONFINEMENT: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SILENCE INTO
POETIC TESTIMONY IN *GATHERING SEAWEED: AFRICAN PRISON WRITING*
BY JACK MAPANJE**

Evrard AMOI*

Abstract

This essay discusses how the author transforms his experience of political incarceration into an act of written speech, thereby resisting the silence imposed by a power establishment. The collection first exposes the strategy of dehumanization and erasure orchestrated by the authoritarian regime, before showing how writing becomes a space for inner survival. By composing his texts despite imprisonment, Mapanje secures his identity and rejects erasure. His voice goes beyond personal testimony to carry the collective memory of African prisons, creating a space for truth, solidarity, and transmission. Through this act of writing, the author turns literature into a tool of resistance, dignity, and reconstruction in the face of oppression.

Keywords: Political incarceration, silence, writing as resistance, collective memory, Oppression.

Résumé

Le présent article traite de comment l'auteur transforme son expérience d'incarcération politique en un acte de parole écrite, résistant ainsi au silence imposé par un pouvoir établi. Le recueil expose d'abord la stratégie de déshumanisation et d'effacement orchestrée par le régime autoritaire, avant de montrer comment l'écriture devient un espace de survie intérieure. En composant ses textes malgré l'enfermement, Mapanje préserve son identité et refuse l'effacement. Sa parole dépasse le témoignage personnel pour porter la mémoire collective des prisons africaines, créant un lieu de vérité, de solidarité et de transmission. À travers ce travail d'écriture, l'auteur fait de la littérature un outil de résistance, de dignité et de reconstruction face à l'oppression.

Mots-clés: Incarcération politique, silence, écriture comme résistance, Mémoire collective, oppression.

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Introduction

Prison literature in Africa serves as a vital place for memory and resistance, where writing becomes a powerful tool to be used to confront both the erasure and forgetfulness imposed by authoritarian regimes. *Gathering Seaweed: African Prison Writing*, a poetic collection by Jack Mapanje, who was imprisoned without a trial under the regime of Hastings Banda in Malawi, is a prime example of this. Through his work, Mapanje engages in a form of resistance against the institutional silence that surrounds the injustices of political imprisonment. His poetry, while not purely autobiographical, becomes a deeply political, sensitive, and collective form of testimony. The collection does not merely recount the experience of confinement; it transcends that. Mapanje transforms his imprisonment into a poetic space where the words themselves become a tool for resistance and a means to reclaim agency. His poems give voice to the silenced, turning the harsh realities of incarceration into a symbolic place for personal and collective reconstruction. In doing so, Mapanje's work reflects the broader role of African prison literature in challenging both the physical and metaphorical imprisonment imposed by authoritarian regimes.

Literary works have been developed on the topic. In her autobiographical collection and critical reflections in *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her Island* (2007), Lorna Goodison explores themes of memory, voice, and the recovery of silenced female narratives within Caribbean history. Her poetic and prose work emphasizes the power of language to reclaim identity and resist erasure. However, Goodison's engagement with silence tends to remain within metaphorical or historical dimensions. Her reflections do not directly address the literal conditions of carceral silence, the enforced muteness and disempowerment of women subjected to imprisonment. Thus, the transformation of that enforced silence

into poetic testimony, as we see in *Gathering Seaweed*, remains an area unexplored in her work.

This article aims to analyze how *Gathering Seaweed* transforms the silence of detention into poetic discourse, revealing both the brutality of political incarceration and the liberating power of language. First, we will examine how the work bears witness to institutionalized silence and the dehumanization resulting from prison life; then, how poetic writing becomes a means for achieving inner resistance; and finally, we will explore the memorial and collective dimension of this poetic voice. From a theoretical perspective, the work can be read through the concept of subaltern voice, where writing allows the author to bring forth a speech formerly confiscated by existing power structures and to symbolically represent those who remain in silence.

1. Institutional Silence and Dehumanization: Prison as a Strategy of Erasure

The first form of violence described in *Gathering Seaweed* is the invisibilization of the prisoner. Silence is not an accidental absence of communication, but rather a tool of domination: it is used to rob the individual of their dignity, status, and voice. The prison, as is represented in the work, is a space of negation, a space where the person is reduced to an existence without a name, without a voice, without a history. This silence manifests itself both through legal opacity, the absence of arrest warrants, trials, or justification, and through the lack of contact with the outside world. The prisoner becomes a confined, anonymous, interchangeable body, and becomes almost inhuman. The material conditions of detention reinforce this dehumanization: overcrowding, filth, and enforced immobility. This environment produces a stifling silence, not the one of peace that generates oppression. The author thus presents the prison as a

machine that crushes language. Intimidation, fear, and despair give birth to a form of muteness. The individual is not only prevented from speaking; he is led to doubt whether speech still has any meaning at all. This strategy of power management aims to neutralize any possibility of resistance by imposing a progressive erasure of the subject. This becomes particularly evident in the following passage from the work:

When I was at home I had many friends,
But when I went to prison they all abandoned me.
That is why those who are not committed to the cause
Cannot be trusted at all.
We agreed that I would find them waiting for me,
What happened to make them deceive me?
They will realize that jail is not death
And I will surely return home (Mapanje, 2002, p. 86).

This passage from *Gathering Seaweed* offers a powerful lens through which can be seen the systematic strategies of psychological erasure employed by authoritarian regimes to silence dissent and disarm political agency. Through a deceptively simple narrative of personal abandonment, Mapanje exposes the broader institutional intent behind imprisonment: not only is the body to physically detained, but the subject's relational world is dismantled. As a result, the individual is severed from the social and ideological networks that sustain resistance. The poem begins with a memory of connection, "When I was at home I had many friends", and it grounds the speaker in a world of community, trust, and mutual purpose. This anchoring in the collective is crucial, as political resistance in oppressive contexts often relies on networks of solidarity to survive. However, the shift that follows, "But when I went to prison they all abandoned me", marks the moment where the carceral system achieves one of its most insidious functions: the orchestration of abandonment. This abandonment is not merely emotional or incidental; it is a calculated outcome of

institutionalized fear, where association with the detained becomes a perceived risk, and silence becomes a strategy for self-preservation.

This process reflects a deliberate fragmentation of collective consciousness. The regime isolates the dissident not only from society but also from the imagined community of the cause, turning former allies into bystanders or even silent collaborators. The psychological violence is doubled: the prison removes the body from the movement, and the system ensures the movement removes itself from the prisoner. In this sense, the betrayal is both personal and political. The speaker expected loyalty, “We agreed that I would find them waiting for me”, not simply out of friendship, but as a shared commitment to a political ideal, a revolutionary pact made among equals.

The line “What happened to make them deceive me?” signals more than confusion or sadness; it points to a structural rupture in trust, one engineered by a regime that weaponizes fear, uncertainty, and isolation. The question also implies that the system’s grip extends beyond prison walls: it can reach into minds, alter behaviors, and disrupt ideological continuity. Deception here is not necessarily intentional; it is systemic. It reveals how oppression reconfigures loyalties, how it manipulates relationships by turning the fate of one into a warning for many. What we see, then, is not simply the loss of friendship, but the attempted erasure of political identity. Imprisonment becomes a technology of disappearance, not in the literal sense of execution, but through symbolic annihilation: severing the prisoner from the narrative of resistance, interrupting the story they were meant to tell, and suggesting that their commitment is no longer relevant, supported, or even remembered. The speaker becomes a ghost within his own movement, a voice heard by no one, a figure already buried by silence.

By expressing this rupture, Mapanje captures one of the most terrifying aspects of carceral repression: not being beaten or tortured, but being forgotten, not dying in prison, but being erased while still alive. The prison becomes a space not just of suffering, but of historical interruption, where lives and causes are suspended indefinitely, with no guarantee of reintegration. This is how authoritarian institutions aim to neutralize resistance : not by direct confrontation, but by dislocating the resistor from their context, isolating them in silence, and ensuring that, outside the prison walls, life continues as if they never existed.

2. Speech as Agency : An Inner Resistance to Imposed Silence

In the face of this logic of erasure, writing becomes an act of self-preservation. It is born in the shadows, sometimes without any material support, carried solely by memory and thought. The poet's mental space thus becomes the last territory of freedom, the only place where speech can still exist. Writing, even in silence, becomes a form of rebellion. In this context, poetry stands out for its capacity to condense, stylize, and transfigure experience. It is not merely a means of narration; it allows reality to be reformulated, reconstructed into a symbolic and intelligible form. Poetic language becomes a shelter from the confusion imposed by confinement. This inner writing process is also a way of keeping memory alive.

Each mentally engraved memory, each reconstructed image, becomes an act of resistance against oblivion. Even when words cannot be spoken or written, the poet continues to compose, to structure his experience with the intention of delayed transmission. He writes in silence, but with the hope of a future listener. Thus, writing becomes a form of resilience. It allows the individual to maintain a relationship with the world, to continue naming, thinking, projecting oneself. The person is no longer entirely subjected to

the carceral universe: through imagination and language; he remains connected to what has been stolen from him, his freedom, his identity, his humanity. This is clearly illustrated in the following passage:

They will realize that jail is not death
My prison term will be over, dear mother,
I implore Ngai to return me home safely,
To see each other with our own eyes
So you can truly believe that i'am still alive,
And I shall die when Ngai wills! (Mapanje, 2002, p. 86)

This passage from *Gathering Seaweed* is a deeply layered act of literary and political defiance. It resists the mutism imposed by an authoritarian power not through loud denunciation, but through the quiet, insistent affirmation of life, presence and agency. In authoritarian contexts, prison functions as a tool of both physical isolation and discursive erasure, the incarcerated are removed not only from public space, but from the collective imagination. The state attempts to overwrite their story, to consign them to silence, invisibility, and eventual oblivion. Yet in this poem, the speaker wages a counteroffensive through the very act of articulation. He names his existence, projects himself into the future, and restores communication with the world beyond prison walls.

The opening line, “They will realize that jail is not death”, serves as both declaration and accusation. It confronts those, political leaders, society, perhaps even former comrades, who have accepted, or internalized, the false equivalence the regime promotes between incarceration and disappearance. In repressive regimes, imprisonment is strategically used to eliminate political subjects from discourse, to silence their voices and render their struggles obsolete. Mapanje’s speaker shatters that imposed silence by asserting that life continues within the cage, that prison has not and will not extinguish his voice or his purpose. This assertion alone is an act of

defiance: to speak from a space designed for silence is to reject the narrative of erasure.

The next line, “My prison term will be over, dear mother”, turns this defiance into a deeply personal vow. By addressing his mother directly, the speaker restores intimacy, connection, and lineage all things authoritarian regimes attempt in vain to fracture. The mother is not only a maternal figure, but a symbol of cultural continuity, emotional grounding, and moral testimony. She represents the world outside that has been denied to the prisoner, the network of relationships and values the regime wants him to forget. In reaching out to her through poetic address, the speaker reclaims his place in that world, refusing the imposed exile, silence and forgetting. Furthermore, this address is not passive or resigned, it is filled with determination and expectation. “I implore Ngai to return me home safely” invokes divine will not as fatalism but as an alternative to state power. Ngai, a spiritual figure rooted in African cosmology, here becomes a counter-sovereign. By appealing to Ngai rather than the state for deliverance, the speaker undermines the leaders’ claim to total control over life and death. This is crucial: in authoritarian discourse, the regime often situates itself as omnipotent, capable of deciding who lives, who dies, and who is to be remembered. By placing his fate in the hands of a divine force, the speaker symbolically dethrones the regime, restoring a cosmic moral order above human tyranny.

The lines that follow, “To see each other with our own eyes / So you can truly believe that I am still alive” underscore the crisis of visibility produced by political incarceration. Here, the speaker touches on a painful truth: in prison, the body is hidden, the voice is suppressed, and the person is reduced to rumor, shadow, or absence. Even loved ones begin to doubt their survival. The insistence on being seen “with our own eyes” reflects a

yearning for epistemic restoration to be known again, not as a political prisoner or an abstract name, but as a living, speaking subject. It is a call to reclaim authorship over one's narrative, to reverse the state's attempt to speak for the prisoner by eliminating him from public memory.

This desire for recognition is not just emotional; it is political. It pushes back against the carceral logic of disappearance, in which individuals are not only imprisoned, but rendered socially and historically irrelevant. By declaring "I am still alive", the speaker affirms a presence the regime has tried to erase. The line becomes a testimony against annihilation, an act of re-entry into the historical record. He reclaims voice as presence, voice as proof of life, voice as a form of being that persists even when the body is confined. Finally, the speaker's closing affirmation "And I shall die when Ngai wills!" is a radical rejection of the regime's claim over life. In authoritarian systems, the state often positions itself as the arbiter of existence, especially in prison contexts where death can be arbitrary, undocumented, or symbolic. By declaring that only Ngai decides when he will die, the speaker refuses the regime's ontological power. He defines himself not as a subject of state control, but as a human being under a higher moral and spiritual order. This is not merely theological; it is a political theology of resistance, where divine sovereignty replaces state violence as the final authority.

In the final analysis, this passage is a masterful example of how poetry can resist imposed mutism through subtle but potent affirmations of life, voice, memory, and moral autonomy. Mapanje refuses to let prison define the boundaries of his being. Instead, he writes through the silence, across the walls, and into the consciousness of those who would otherwise forget. The speaker reclaims his voice not just to speak, but to exist fully, beyond the reach of those who tried to silence him.

3. Poetry and Collective Memory: From Subaltern Voice to Universal Voice

Beyond a simple account of individual experience, *Gathering Seaweed* constructs a profound and resonant collective memory. Jack Mapanje's poetic writing transcends the boundaries of personal narrative; it becomes a chorus that echoes the silenced voices of countless political prisoners across the African continent. The trauma he recounts is not his alone, it is emblematic of a much larger, shared experience of repression, exile, and resistance. This shift from the personal to the collective lies at the very core of the work's memorial function and political resonance. Through his poetry, Mapanje assumes the role of witness not only for himself, but for the absent, the forgotten, and the dead. His voice stands in for those who cannot speak, for those who have been silenced by regimes that feared the truth. By transforming personal suffering into a language of solidarity, he restores dignity and visibility to lives deliberately erased from official records.

His poetry becomes more than expression, it becomes an act of remembrance, a site of historical recovery, and a symbolic archive of resistance. In this way, *Gathering Seaweed* does not merely resist forgetting; it actively repairs what has been broken, records what has been hidden, and archives what history has tried to suppress. Mapanje's poetic voice, emerging from the silence of confinement, offers not only testimony but also restoration, a reaffirmation that every voice, no matter how suppressed, has the power to endure through language.

Poetic language also makes it possible to go beyond the limits of complaint or denunciation. It gives form to the unrepresentable, to that which escapes ordinary language: fear, absolute silence, madness, the loss of time. It reaches a truth that is denser, more complex, and more human.

Through this, the work becomes a poetic site of memory, at once intimate and political. Finally, this work of memory is not solely turned toward the past: it engages the future. In recounting imprisonment, the poet warns against its repetition. He inscribes into collective consciousness the trace of what must be known, passed on, and never repeated. In this way, *Gathering Seaweed* does not speak only of a particular era or regime, but of the human condition in the face of the violence of power. This is especially evident in the following passage:

When our Kimathi ascended
Into the mountains alone
He asked for strength and courage
To decisively deceive the colonialists.
He said that we should tread
The paths that he had trodden,
That we should follow his revolutionary footsteps
And drink from his cup.
If you drink from the cup of courage,
That cup I have drunk from myself,
It is a cup of pain and of suffering,
A cup of tears and of death.
(...) Do not be afraid of imprisonment
Nor should you lose heart for being detained (Mapanje, 2002, p. 87)

In this deeply resonant passage, Jack Mapanje draws on the powerful historical memory of Dedan Kimathi, the anti-colonial freedom fighter to reframe his own experience of political imprisonment as part of a broader, ongoing tradition of resistance. The poem is not only a recollection of suffering but a reassertion of identity, legacy, and communal struggle, even from within the confines of a prison cell. Through evocative imagery and a deliberate blending of personal voice with national memory, Mapanje transcends the individual condition of the prisoner to speak as and for a collective force in the making. This act of poetic narration transforms writing into a weapon against erasure, and memory into a force of political affirmation.

The invocation of Kimathi is not accidental. Kimathi represents not just a man, but a symbol of uncompromising resistance, someone who stood alone against empire, who «ascended into the mountains» and took on the burden of struggle. By opening the poem with this figure, Mapanje places himself in a lineage of fighters and visionaries, suggesting that his own imprisonment is a continuation of the same fight. Though the enemies may have changed, the forces of domination and repression persist. The poet does not claim to be a hero in isolation; instead, he identifies himself with a tradition that calls on others to follow the same path: “We should tread the paths he had trodden, / That we should follow his revolutionary footsteps”. In so doing, Mapanje resists the fragmentation and isolation that political imprisonment often imposes and, instead, reconnects his voice to a wider historical and communal purpose.

The central metaphor of the «cup of courage» is particularly significant. It is described not in heroic or romantic terms, but with a brutal honesty. It is “A cup of pain and of suffering, / A cup of tears and of death”. This is a sober recognition of the cost of resistance. And yet, the speaker declares, “I have drunk from it myself”. This statement is both confessional and empowering: he has endured what others before him have endured, and by consequently, he claims a place among them. He elevates his own suffering into a form of moral and historical continuity, presenting courage not as a grand gesture, but as a painful, enduring commitment to truth and justice.

What is especially powerful in this passage is the deliberate and unwavering refusal to succumb to fear, despair, or silence, even in the face of the overwhelming and dehumanizing conditions of imprisonment. “Do not be afraid of imprisonment / Nor should you lose heart for being detained”, the speaker declares with striking clarity and conviction. These

lines do far more than reflect Mapanje's personal resilience, they extend the emotional and political reach of the poem beyond his individual experience. They speak directly to others: to fellow prisoners whose stories remain untold, to readers who may never know the inside of a cell, to those on the outside who are called upon to witness and respond. This act of speaking becomes an invitation to join the struggle, to remain firm in the face of injustice, and to resist the corrosive effects of authoritarian repression. In that way, the poem transforms from a solitary act of testimony into a collective call to consciousness, courage, and resistance. Mapanje's reclamation of voice serves not only to articulate personal pain, but to generate solidarity and action. His words resonate as both remembrance and provocation urging us not only to honor the memory of those silenced, but also to recognize the power of poetic language to awaken, to unite, and to resist.

The prison, in this context, becomes more than a place of confinement, it is turned into a site of consciousness, where the act of writing becomes an act of survival, rebellion, and continuity. While authoritarian regimes attempt to strip prisoners of their identity and silence their narratives, Mapanje uses poetry to reverse this logic. He affirms that even in captivity, he retains agency, dignity, and memory. More importantly, he shows that writing can carry the voices of the silenced, building bridges across time and space, between past heroes and present fighters, between isolation and solidarity. Through this passage, Mapanje demonstrates that the voice of the imprisoned is not condemned to remain subaltern or invisible. By invoking shared symbols, historical memory, and communal language, he turns his voice into a resonant, collective force. In doing so, he breaks the boundaries imposed by both colonial and postcolonial power structures, and asserts that resistance is not extinguished by silence, it is reborn through speech.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article stands as a compelling example of how poetic expression can transform spaces of oppression into sites of resistance, memory, and meaning. Jack Mapanje's poetry does not simply recount the harsh realities of political imprisonment—it reclaims those experiences through language, reshaping silence into testimony. In doing so, Mapanje challenges the machinery of authoritarian control that seeks to erase individuality and suppress dissent. His words become a form of survival, resistance, and ultimately, liberation.

Throughout the collection, Mapanje masterfully blends personal reflection with political commentary, crafting verses that are at once intimate and collective. His use of metaphor, irony, and layered symbolism reveals the psychological impact of incarceration, while simultaneously resisting the imposed silence of the prison system. The poems do not remain confined within the personal real, they reach outward, speaking for a broader community of silenced individuals, giving presence and dignity to those whose stories remain untold. *Gathering Seaweed* is, therefore, not only a literary document of personal suffering but also a powerful political act. It reimagines the prison cell as a space where language can flourish, where identity can be reaffirmed, and where resistance can take poetic form. Mapanje's voice, though once silenced by force, returns with greater strength and clarity, asserting both the right to speak and the need to be heard.

The theoretical lens of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the subaltern voice has been crucial in enriching our interpretation of Mapanje's work. Her framework helps illuminate how his poetry articulates a voice that had been deliberately marginalized and erased by systems of power. Through this lens, we understand *Gathering Seaweed* not just as a personal

act of expression, but as a profound reclamation of agency, where poetic language becomes a vehicle for resistance, remembrance, and the re-emergence of silenced voices.

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