

Divine Poetry Prize 2007

This is the third year that the Divine Poetry Prize has been run. It was established by Lucy Palmer.

Prizes come from the estate of the late Julian Thirlwell, a lawyer and long-time resident of PNG, noted for his love of literature and the use of language.

This year's theme was 'bilas'.

**FIRST PRIZE - THE MUDMEN OF ASARO BY
STEPHEN MEL 3rd year PNG Studies student**

**SECOND PRIZE - BILAS BY LEO SARIWA 1st
year Information Systems student**

**THIRD PRIZE FEATHER FOR BILAS BY
DANIEL ASANG 3rd year Communication Arts
student**

The judges noted that a further 8 finalists (whose poems are also shown below) had 'wonderful' poems.

“The Mudmen of Asaro”

By Steven Mel PG3

From cold mists they appear
Living spirits of ancient, ancestral
Asaro warriors,
Clay burdened figures, their
Ghostly attire, a trigger;
Raising many a deep
Hidden fear,

Through fog colored mornings
They stride, stroll and steer,
Slowly, silently, stealthily,
Limbs in fluid motions,
Striking awe and terror
Even mysterious wonder
To any who dare draw
Ever so near,

Limbs and torso bleached
With earth,
Muscles rock hard caked
In mud,
Bamboo claws clatter and clang
Pointed needles
Sharper than razor,

Arms sweep and swirl
Waving weightlessly
Bow and arrow poised
The mud men stalk silently,
Effortlessly in solemn
Spooky splendor,
Floating spirits walking
Purposefully in ghostly
Unnatural manners,

The legendry bilas of
The mud man hails from
Bold warriors of bygone days
Clothed, covered carelessly in mud
To battle fields they often did trudge
In awesome, gruesome masks

From valley mists they do descend
Slowly slithering in ghostful haze
Bearing haunting, terrifying masks
Made of soil, mud
And colorless clay

Petrified pain and heartfelt fear
Do grip enemies
With troublesome terror,
Spirits of dead they do resemble,
Helpless enemies wail warily in tears;
Fleeing hastily
It's the spirits they fear

Walking yet upon our land
The mud men's bilas
Burns ever so strong
The legacy of a thousand
Years gone,
Enshrouded by mud
The world has known
Of mud soaked men
In spiritual trance,

Identity they see
Pride they feel
When the mud men's bilas
Motivates his ghastly dance.

Bilas

*Profound yet mysterious,
Dignity and identity,
Colors of Distinction,
Protruding the mystery,
Out of the dreams,
Crafted with spells and means,*

*Simple yet profound,
Untouched treasure,
Time beholds,
Blessed design,
Still the same,
Nature donates,
Culture creates,*

*Beautiful yet astonishing
Trace of the eye
Of the beauty behind
Imagination of the past
Alive the air
Years it heirs
Glint of the sun
To the praise of time*

*Colors merge
Nature relate
Tradition and past
To the present date
Season to showz
Reason to hide*

*Abundant yet rare
To the creator
The secret lies
Until the season ends
The glimpse cease
To the wind and the rain
The power that sees
Remains in the voice that speaks
Yet it lives
Colors of the wild
Natures very own*

*By: Leo Sariwa
IS yr 1*

Feather for Bilas

By Daniel Asang

It lay on the floor
Among the scraps of paper
The dust and the dirt
Made it to be unworthy

A feather it was
Lost and lonely
In a place unknown
Not knowing where to belong

My Bubu would talk
Of his old feathers
For he was a dancer
They said

Tumbuna tales say
A feather is important
For color
For dance
For beauty
And power

But today, it is no more
The feather, like many others
Belongs to a bird
From the many other birds

Today it's the white man bilas
It's the clothes
It's the hair
It's the dark shades
And the shoes
That look better

What the feather
Is that all there is
Of all the things created
Good and beautiful

Today many believe in books
Which tell you the right kind
The right kind of bilas.

The images that speak of people
Important people
So far away
And more beautiful
In the right kind of bilas.

Or the white man's God
Who gives beauty
To the inner soul
Which I have come to know of

Yes its bilas for the soul
That brings a smile

Where are those of old?
Have the days of old gone?
Ah!
The sound of music and song

But what about this feather?
Fallen and rejected
Will it be forever?
Will there be beauty in a feather?

A CENTRAL TALE, by Heni Aisi PG3

She stood among the boys on the hill tops over looking the bay
Farewelling her fellow clansmen who prepared to set sail
Dressed in a beige grass skirt that swung freely over the lower parts of her knees
Exposing her bronze legs to the deadly Papuan sun
Accompanied by a beaded necklace that hung swaying over her bare chest
Portraying the simplicity of her cultural attire.

Her body was made to not only be hers but her entire clans canvass
That showed her status and position in society in the form of tattoos.
Her tattooed tears that trickled a trail down her face
Reminded the women and children of the Hiri Trade
But the tears not only served as a reminder
For they were a spectacle of emotion that constantly appeared among the women
As they were forced, months on end,
To live without their husbands, brothers, fathers, sons and uncles.

The tattoos on her body all told a tale of her life
Some showing her age and feminine status
Whilst others acknowledged her marital status and kinship relations
Her hands were played with for further tales
Whilst her back was transformed into a human mural
Her beauty was radiated by such works
Causing her status to be upgraded.

Her beaded necklace was only complimented with a pigs tusk necklace on special occasions
Which she let swing proudly against her back giving light to her muraled body
The beaded necklaces were worn in such a way that together they formed an X across her chest.
Her head was magnified with a head dress made of bird feathers
The centre, being the largest was taken from the bird of Paradise
Her arms were held prisoner to two toea shell armed bands
That were forced up the length of her arm until they could go no further
Her ankles were encircled with miniature grass skirts
That clinged to them like a child does a mother.

Today she does not stand among the boys on the hilltop
For she is down on the seashore among the women
Singing the welcome song and making way for the men to anchor their Lakiotis
The wait is over and her beauty is magnified by all the things that she needs to compliment her
usual bilas
From head to toe, she shows of the glory of her cultural bilas.
Her head boasts a beautiful feathered headdress that only her people could have made
Her body masters a mural even Leonardo would find hard to create
Her upper body shows three simple necklaces that arouse her simplicity
While her beige grass skirts play their roles of sitting comfortably on her hips and ankles
She feels complete not only as a woman but as a Motuan woman
For she boasts the cultural bilas of a Motuan woman!

“THE HAGEN SHOW”

Elizabeth Nagong TH3

Their hearts swell
Upon seeing, feathers, plumes
And paint,
Swaying, soaring, singing
Rising, dancing, waving
Leaves Bustle, shells rustle muscles
Gleaming in style,

Men and women in
Colors of brilliance and
Multi-colored shine
Black, red, white and blue
Human rainbows of traditional cultures
Only Papua New Guinea knows,

The Wigmen, the Mudmen,
The snakemen
Kundus thumping, legs pumping
Ghostly dances,
Black white lines of
Snake resemblance,

Powerful women in
Traditional makeup,
Grass skirts, kina shells
Pearl shells, hanging endlessly,
Owl feathers searching, reaching
Seeking for the air,

Enga warriors, Hagen Warriors
Colorful men, from noble Jiwakan
Chairs,
Sing in trance, dancing in chants
Their bilas a chorus
To their mighty tribal voices,

The Kundu thumping the great conductor
Leading a colorful marching band,
Cameras flash, tourists glance
Of this lifetime chance to see
The Hagen show or what they
Call the greatest show on earth,

Around the grounds

The crowd does see
Men, women in colorful
Cultural dance,
Impressive magnificence none
Like it, found anywhere
Across the seas,

The show ending, the circles begin
Arms linked together in time.
The crowd joins in
As the curtains draw in,
Let the WAIPA dances begin,

Stomping, stamping strenuously
The earth quakes as human
Feet shake,
Dancing in rhyme chanting in time
The waipa circles revolve,

Tis all a part of this glorious show
Which comes only once a while,
To Hagen they flock, tourists,
Dancers and all
To witness the great big tribal dance,
This is the Hagen show,

To see and feel a magical trance
Of people from cultures unknown
United in spirit, united in dance, united
In many technicolored chants

Tis all a part of the pride they feel
When need to show identity reveals
Men and women from everywhere
Gathering together in bilas wear
Showcasing many a tribal flair
Thousands do come only to stare,

Amazed and awed they gaze enchanted
Feeling the magic of the
Great Mt Hagen Show.

Divine Poetry Prize 2007

This poem discusses the theme “*Bilas*”. *Bilas* meaning beauty, finery or something decorated to give beauty. However the term *bilas* also has a negative meaning connected to it. *Bilas* can mean being pretentious, scornful or even hideous, etc. This poem was written in a way to address the two aspects of the theme itself, which are both the positive and negative sides. For everything, no matter what it might be, regardless of it been a word, character or even material things, there is always a good and bad side to it. The term *Bilas* is no exception.....

Poem Title: Behind that fine beauty lays the true you

**Beauty deep within
Is better than that outside
Tok bilas¹ what more!**

**Your beauty’s outside
While insides is as cold as ice
So you think it’s nice?**

**Beauty is skin- deep
But no, bilas em yu stret!
For these ways you keep**

**You smile with great glee
Staring with prying dark eyes
Wide and so scornful**

**That’s your finery
The asset that defines you
That is your beauty**

**Beautiful yet Boastful
Inviting while Insulting
Loving yet Lying
Adoring while Accusing
Succumbing yet Subjective**

Poem originally written by: Maria Court (PNG Studies Year 4)

¹ Tok Bilas means to pretend

A Young Simbu Man's Pride

By: Gloria Nema PNG Studies 3

The day beckons, calling him
A young man stands restlessly
Rising early in highland mist,
When dew greets glistening green grass,
His heart thundering tremendously
Resounding the kundus
Which echo throughout
The day.

All the practice and the time
Spent learning, singing in rhyme
Are testimonies to the pride he feels,
When upon this very day
His identity he unveils.

Bark belts arms wrap around tight,
Support provided for a Youngman's
First flight.
Bal hangs to his feet, the noble robe
Protecting a young newly found
State of manhood.

Cane bands on wrist, arms
And around Muscles tight,
From gaps do sprout bush ferns
And leaves of all kinds,
Cuscus fur and pearl shells,
Hang proudly from His neck,
The young man stands tall as the bilas
Suddenly transforms.

Crushed ochre and colorful paints
Disguises his face, illuminating,
Highlighting, magnificence and grace,
Red, White, yellow and Black
Colors of earth, fire, water and sky
Moulds a young man, to a
Marvelous human being.

Siune Miuge, Kagl and Baundo
A majestic crown, headdress of paradise, and from noble birds
Of New Guinea Air.
Parrot, Kingfisher, Owl and Ambane
Make up an emblem, none like it to
Be found anywhere,

Tanget leaves, fern leaves, leaves from high mountains,
Protect and uphold, their rustle
A chorus, to the songs he will sing.

A being transfigured the young
Man stands
A glance in a pool and he knows not who he is,
A warrior, an ancestor, a mighty tribal chief.
All the lessons and the plans are the price he has paid, as he waits in solemn silence, heart
pumping in restless anticipation.

Muscles gleaming with tree oil and sweat
Rock hard they are,
As a young man looks for his trusted spear,
As others like him gather,
The kundu beats echo, pounding in his ear,
His veins tighten, His blood roars and chants, his heart thumps mercilessly
Finally his day his here.

His metamorphosis done,
He grabs his spear
Dances, gracefully, twisting and
Turning in midair,
Heartfelt singing, a chorus of chants
Vibrating every human who stands
Near to hear.

The Bilas of his ancestors,
The bilas of his tribe,
The identity of his father and
His fathers before that,
The songs of his motherland
The songs of his people
The songs of his pride
Erupts in a young Simbu man's heart.

Today's girl preparing for Cultural show, by Bosorina Robby, CA3
.....

New year, new cultural show. Oh well, better get a move on. Better look great for the day.

Scrub rouge and blusher and powder off face,

Wipe deep red lipstick off firm, pouty lips,

Wash mascara out off eyelashes,

Take off long silver earrings and chains, rings and others worthy of J.Lo's bling bling.

Take off fancy hair clips and shake out meticulously brushed long, platinum bleached hair.

Carefully take off expensive Gucci T-shirt and shorts and hang in wardrobe

Step out off funky new Prada leather sandals and line next to same brand foot wears

Admire self in latest sexy lingerie from the Kylie Minogue Spring Collection and reluctantly remove top

Allow Mummy, Aunty and BubuMeri to rub lots of coconut oil over tanned honey skin for a golden glow

Sigh dramatically and sit down in front of BubuMeri to put traditional make up on face in a design with only three colours to choose from-black charcoal, red seeds and white from lime mixed with water.

Stand up straight and tall while Aunty ties on the ridiculously short beautiful red grass-skirt around slim hips, patting it to make sure all fall neatly into place

Stretch out long smooth tanned arms for Mummy to put on black woven arm bands and stuff in smelly leaves boiled in creamy coconut

The rumbling and grumbling of tummy not from hunger but from the heady mix of bilas scents from all around

Stand on chair patiently for Mom to rub black charcoal on well- shaped shaven legs from knees to ankles and dot with white paint, mimicking knee high school girl socks.

Be still as BubuMeri puts big beautifully crafted necklaces and shell money that befits your status around slim shoulders and waist

And tie on wrist bands and ankle bands to add colour

Raise arms out so Aunty can tie on brightly designed yellow belt around waist and the bundles of betel nut in all shades green and orange across well formed chest

Give BubuMeri the honours of putting onto hair the brightly decorated headdress and feathers painstakingly made for perfect beauty like yours

Finally, when all is ready and looking perfect, with adrenalin rushing through your veins and excitement bubbling forth, step out into the arena in graceful movements to the rhythm of the whistle and let the world be dazzled by your beautiful traditional dress as when they gape at you in your modern attire.

The Papua New Guinea Way, by Wendy Tame, RS3

The *bilas*.....

how beautiful the feathers,
colorful as the beautiful lilies
the feathers of the Bird of Paradise
how awesome is

your hat is covered with ornaments,
your face is painted,
yellow, red and white, glowing colors,
black is applied to show your identity,
what a marvelous design it is...

as you dress, the beautiful kina shell glows,
displaying your wealth,
your masculinity,
your pride its brightness attracts the eyes

the beautiful necklaces are worn,
arm are tied
belts buckle are fastened
how handsome you are

how beautiful it is...

with the read and green tangets,

the beautiful green leaves,
armor of our natural environment

oil is poured on your body,

like the rain waters the lily
sweet fragrance,
the sense of humor attracting the eyes

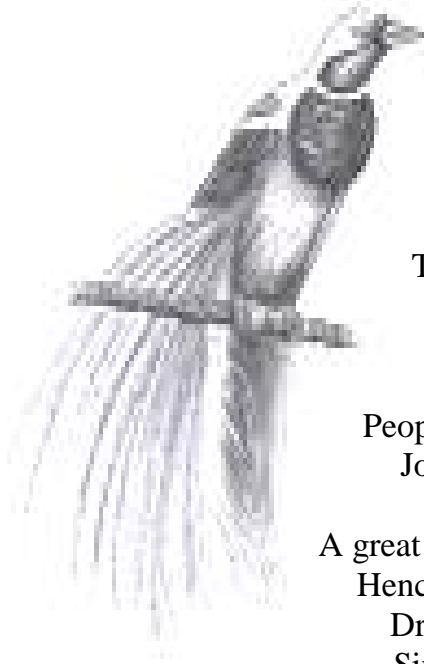
all day long,
watching your *malo*
swaying side to side
following the rhythm
of your *kundu*,

as you sing and dance along
the beautiful hornbill plumes
sway up and down
like a parrot
displaying its beauty

how marvelous is our Bilas,
lovely songs, beautiful bodies,
our culture, our tradition, our identity the Papua New Guinea way.

Listen Papua New Guinea, the Bird speaks!

Raising my wings I stretched
while the golden rays of the vibrant sun defines the dawn and hitting the canopy
divides into mini rays
setting my wings ablaze throughout the forest
My elongated plumage obediently responds to the rays:
Beige, Auburn, Gold, White-
All dazzling as to blur
only to catch the eyes of my lover
for my beauty is for my mate
Swiveling to poise warmth all is in silence as they staggeringly observed my effort
After I preened for perfection, I forged ahead to the highest level:
my exotic whistle
assisted with a few hops and a slight jitter
for I not only present a glorious complexion but its significance
and I fear deluding my noble men-masters
Let alone those who abuse my status through the dispensable millinery trends
Or worse- in the course of deforestation
where my haven is taken away from me
My end-an honorary position
for *Bilas*
so I live again
In that context, I am not endangered
I am just passing through
Thus I call on you-free humanitarian beings
Keep your pride alive
Keep me living
Dance like me
People from the mountains, People from the coasts
Join in the Tari Huli Mali or the Papuan Hula
Dress like me
A great honor it would be to spare my body for your gear
Hence, arise and imitate the supreme of your forest,
Dress and show, now, 'your' beauty at its peak
Sing and inspire with the songs of the *kanakas*
Bilas your symbol of liberty-me,
The Bird of Paradise!



By Delilah Kond, CA1

Poetry Competition

Title:

The Dancing Spirit of New Guinea

Cover my head with a Huli's wig,
Oil my body with Tambul's fat,
Coat my face with Asaro's mud,
I fear the cowboy's gig,
Coz I am a Highlander in a gush of plumes,
And not a Whiteman's tribe in a cloud of fumes.

Hang me the Misima's cowry shell,
Cloth my breast with a Kikori's possum fur,
Wear my arms with a Binandere's band,
I fear the pop culture,
Coz I am a Papuan in my tattoo style,
And not an American with a Mexican ban.

Hand me a Morobean drum,
Tie my wrists with Karkar's band,
Give me the Sepik spirits to sway with my sarong,
I fear the rocking mob,
Coz I am from Momase,
And not a Caucasian with a percussion.

Paint my toes with Keviang's lime,
Sparkle my feet with Tolai's oil,
Make me dance to a Buka's pipe
I fear the jumping beat of a Tango dance,
Coz I am an Islander in a Dukduk style,
And not an Irish in a bear's fur.

By:

Gavin EDWARD
(4th Yr. PNG Studies)
DWU 2007