



O Arise!



Michael Dom

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**Poems on Papua New Guinea's
Politics & Society**

Michael Dom

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Reviews

It's very difficult for a writer or poet not to be political in a developing nation. In this they are following a long tradition. In more regressive regimes they are mercilessly suppressed. In PNG this is fortunately not the case. At its worst the government has only inadvertently hindered such discourse by failing to provide suitable avenues for its expression. The political class are doing themselves a disservice, not least because the writers and poets are finding their own platforms, most notably on social media. If the politicians prefer not to listen the ordinary people will. A poem is a powerful weapon, especially in the hands of a master like Michael Dom. One day the politicians will rue their deafness.

Phil Fitzpatrick – Author & publisher Pukupuk Publishing

Michael Dom has poetry all over him and is surely the most talented of Papua New Guinean poets. Though his array of poetry is diverse, his work on PNG politics is filled with the best piercing and most blistering political poetry ever. His poem can drive a plebeian to madness, a bureaucrat searching for civic virtue and a politician hanging his or her head in shame for self-serving. The artistically worded prose makes us stand in awe and admiration and is definitely a work of a gifted mind. I assure you that you will experience the anguish and mischief of PNG politics in your mind's eye and equally a hope for a brighter future in this work.

*Kelakapkorā Sil Bolkin – Author of *The Flight of the Galkope**

I have read most, if not all, these poems before and revisiting them again in print is to be reacquainted with old friends. Michael Dom is a world class poet and a world class poetic innovator. He writes - sometimes obliquely, sometimes directly - about politics, society, corruption, development and other crucial issues in the life of a nation, in reality it could be any nation, struggling to be fair to itself and its people; And often not struggling nearly hard enough because the end result of struggle may be a real threat to privilege and entitlement. Michael Dom uses poetry to reveal such truths without ever glossing over the difficulties of moving to a better state.

Keith Jackson AM – Adjunct Professor School of Journalism & Communications, The University of Queensland

To Maeve O' Collins

On behalf of The Dom Family

Thank you for teaching our father. Thank you for being our bubu. You helped to raise some proud Papua New Guineans.

I will always remember our family visits to the House of Parliament and the National Museum. No one else would have taken us there, but you did, and I am so glad that we went—cramped little red car and all.

I am sorry about the lintel and the carved posts which were destroyed, but there was very little anyone could do to stop it from happening. This book doesn't make up for them (nor, I think, does the other one). Nothing will. We've lost those artworks forever. They're not alive anymore, like when we saw them. Now they're just dead relics of a culture that people would sooner forget. Maybe we can learn better from what happened. I hope so.

I hope that the poetry in this book can help us.

M.T. Dom

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Yesterday we dreamed

It was not so long ago
Hardly more than a lifetime or so
When our nation was so young
And our history had just begun.

Then, they stood them all
Forefathers tall
And blessed us
With an anthem song.

We forward went, hither sent
Each tribe and clan,
In this proud Melanesian land,
Every son and daughter born;
United we did stand
With transient shackles shorn
As a new day did dawn.

Did then we dare to dream
And transcend as one?
Have our ancestors been told
How far we have come?
What do we tell of?
What praise, what glory,
That children will hear
As pleasant bedtime stories?

Our Guardians now indulge
In self-serving histrionics

While idle sons
And beleaguered daughters
Survive on informal economics.

Where now, the integrity of Chiefs?
That they may bless us truly
Where too, the vigor of youth?
That will ensure a victory.
How now our mothers and children
Bear the brunt of brutality
When we fail to act rightly?
What future lies in our hands?
Who will fulfill this people's destiny?

O arise all ye sons of this land
Let us sing of our joy to be free...
Only yesterday we dreamed
Let us sleep no more.

Tribalism to Nationalism

Until this day we are tribes;
 each one desiring nationhood,
Eyes closed to the past, blind to the present,
 yet we seek a future;
Was what we called our Melanesian Way
 a transient dream?

Welcome to Bibliocracy

A vibrant democracy
A rampant hypocrisy
This is the PNG way

Casual religious bigotry
Crippled informal economy
This is all we have today

Women die from pregnancy
Children learn delinquency
Men rape with impunity

Pursue polygamy and promiscuity
Fear to free homosexuality
Ignore the blatant inequality

Villagers live like their ancestors
Ministers live like rich investors
Working folk are forever debtors

High unemployment rate
No parliamentary debate
Leads the way to a failed state

Leaders ply disinformation
Speakers try misinformation
People get lost in confusion

Crimes our leaders perpetrate

Perpetuate societies hate
On PNG time, a savior will be late

Sacrifices must be made
Carvings that craftsmen had made
Were the first to go on our crusade

We brought home a Holy Book
And that same day sanity forsook
We placed it in the House of Crooks

We say we are Melanesian
More Christian than other Christians
Then crucify our own Constitution

Our newfangled philosophy
Is Melanesian Christianity
Welcome to Bibliocracy.

A message from the Estate of Icarus

When the Poet's voice is silenced
There is only an after echo of fading thought.
It is the snuffing of candlelight at the market table.

When the Poet's voice is silenced
Truth is raped at the Public Gathering Places
And Beauty is fed to bastardized Beasts.

When the Poet's voice is silenced
The Politicians will sing you sweet lullabies
As their Priests offer you the wine of forgetfulness;

When the Poet's voice is silenced
The Politicians scheme your Melanesian philosophies
And their Priests dictate your customary offerings.

Lo, when the Poets cower, in shadows, relegated;
Behold! There stand the Politicians, shining, elevated,
As the people swoon at the words of their Priests;

Our graveyards "are fine and fertile places"
Bestowed with all the knowledge and wisdom
Of Good Men & Women who pass Unborn,
When the Poet's voice is silenced.

Dear Honorable Sirs

We are your loyal supporters, remember us
Your fellow Papua New Guineans
The honored rabble that raised you up to lofty heights
We drink your poisoned brew
While we suffer your misspent fortunes
Watch our heritage squandered
And our independence scorned.

In our National Parliament
Where once walked wise men, proud and true
Where once were just laws, written and defended
Foolishness now rules that house
Where the Honorable vie for their own (rabble)
With their educated rhetoric, regurgitated oratory
Sanctimonious as wallowing sows and as smelly.

In our Nation's Capital
Beggars loiter while wealthy loaded landowners' loaf
Pickpockets, thieves and informal street sellers roam
As mountains crumble and trees topple
Littering our rivers and seas
Our ancestral lands and siblings are divided over riches
Money for dishonorable dignity in Port Moresby.

There Honorable Sirs you dwell
And celebrate our nation's prosperity
Which we apparently are yet to receive
There Honorable Sirs you play pernicious politics
You and your rabble, squabble, dribble, grapple

For position, power and prestige, PNG Big Man policies
Your slightest glance is our grace, Dear Honorable Sirs.

In our towns and villages
Far, far from freeways, Fairfax and Finance Ministry
We hear tales of civilization, rumors of development
Our aging fathers idly reminisce
While their beloved sons seek other forms of bliss
Mothers and matriarchs do what their daughters should do
Excuse what their children have done, and for you.

We are the commoners from those rural towns and villages
Those hamlets not seen on Falcons flight
Distant, and remote, you've forgotten our vote
Our sweat feeds this nation
Our blood/land bathes/fills your alters/coffers
Our tears are granted no remittance
Our fates are in your hands.

We are the unheard voices
Disenchanted, disowned and denied
How long lived is your deception
Schemes and dreams and fantasies
Where are the promised fruits?
Your majestic visions
Leave us in dearth and doom.

We are your people
We gave, glorified and groveled for you
Now disrespected, deceived and destitute
We are the infants you suckle on a flimsy future

The unborn cheated, betrayed and bartered
As your virulent greed robs our womb.
God save Papua New Guinea!

Limerick for the clowns in parliament

When I think of government as a circus
It makes sense why our leaders pervert us
Because at the end of the day
For being a clown to pay
Cavorting and contorting is their business.

Limerick on the Exim Bank loan

Penge, all hairy, lean muscled and mean
Was seduced by an Asian prom queen,
But when the bed was spread
And he went for the bread,
He found out that the queens' name was Dean

Obama to O'Namah

Papua New Guinea's answer to President Obama
Was the 2011 duo that we liked to call O'Namah
They gave us two GG's, PM's, CJ's and much drama
But come election time they split-up, what a bummer!

Verse on the lintel

Eclectic craftsmen carved one log by hand,
With dreams in their hearts unseen by others,
Before these halls where true leaders should stand:
A host of faces, a band of brothers.

It was a carving meant to instill awe.
Now it's lost to Papua New Guineans,
Those who will never stand before this door
And sense here their soul - Melanesian!

O arise all ye

Chainsaw-churchgoers
Razed 'Haus Tambaran's' lintel
"O arise all ye..."
Kumul's tattered cloth flutters
From a rust-eaten white pole

Olgeta kirap

Sen-saw-lotu-lain
Rausim bun blo 'Haus Tambaran'
Olgeta kirap
Kumul bagarap antap
Long pipia hap aien

Waiting for 2050

Say what you will
for faded glory
those tales have had their day

Pay homage as you wish
to colleagues and cronies
those mates have gone their way

Days past our dawning
history yet forming
put our eight point plan away

Swayed by the crooning
supporters are swooning
and development is further delayed

Does a child envision
from a mother's bosom
his own children's destiny today?

Yet a lifetime has been
and after all one has seen
isn't another two score too far away?

If we dream of a day
and we hope and we pray
will God grant what we want—less delay?

If we argue of meaning
without rhyme, within reason
the job of government is governing
not dreaming

Wide awake, with eyes open
and minds soberly focused
which is wanting
as we've found much too often

One can only hope
the next people we vote
make decisions deserving of note

While most struggle to survive
waiting for 2050 to arrive
we must try to keep that hope alive.

Sonnet 16: 1975 to 2015

September 16, Independence Day
And forty years it has been in between
Far down this road, how much closer today,
Are we to that Melanesian dream?
What may we toast this Independence Day?
Which-where have we been, what-when have we seen?
Why may we boast of 'much better' today?
How much bolder and brighter do children dream?
Have we won the war, so that they may play
Safe from those whose hearts and minds are obscene?
Then maybe one day our children will say
What wonderful people we must have been?
God save us all this Independence Day,
Keep us just as or better than the Queen.

The Aspiring Politician's 36 Winning Ways for Making Monkeys

We are in the business of making monkeys
We breed them and feed them
We baptize them in our creed
We bestow them with our greed

We are in the business of making monkeys
We wean them and preen them
We crown them at our will
We disown them at a whim

We are in the business of making monkeys
We inveigle them and ignite them
We inspire them with our dreams
We ingrain them in our schemes

We are in the business of making monkeys
We belie them and belittle them
We baffle them with ease
We bamboozle them as we please

We are in the business of making monkeys
We deride them and deprive them
We deny them satisfaction
We defeat them with our system

We are in the business of making monkeys
We cajole them and enroll them

We payroll them with our profits
We pacify them with our promises

We are in the business of making monkeys
We defile them and revile them
We educate them in depravity
We domesticate them in poverty

We are in the business of making monkeys
We mislead them and maroon them
We amputate them from reason
We direct them to self-destruction

We are in the business of making monkeys
We whore them and devour them
We defy them with our hypocrisy
We deny them true democracy

Three senryu for free education

a right provided
like a prized jewel
free education

a few boxes ticked
to keep the voters happy
free education

a bone tossed to
hungry dogs to fight over
free education

Olsem wanem nau, Ongagno?

Ohh, brata blong mi Ongagno
Blong wanem yu toromoi kumul bilas bilong yu?

Na traipela tit blong pik ya,
Yu lusim igo bek long bus o?
Em ino moa pas long bros bilong yu.

Na we stap gris pik bilong kaikai
Na putim long sikin?
Ating singing bilong yu nau em ino inap swit tumas?

Ohh, brata blong mi Ongagno
Olsem wanem nau, Ongagno?

Oh my Penge

Oh my Penge!
What a precious fool you are
To sell yourself so cheaply
Where is your forefather's legacy?

Your gardens, long unattended
Are barren and overgrown in weeds
Our land that sustained
A hundred generations
Lies pilfered, plundered and polluted
Grieve now for what you have done
More so what you have not
Give back to your children
What your fathers gave to theirs.

Once upon a time
From a revered hilltop green
You're beloved Kumul
Was raised so proudly
Proclaiming identity and liberty
But you have swapped
Your people's philosophy
For wealth and prosperity
A bloated ego and procured status
Adorned with bright trinkets
As your shining vanity
Yet stumbling like a fool
Caring not for caution
For you have chosen a starless path.

Oh my Penge!
What a precious fool you are
To sell yourself so cheaply
How many good men will die for you?
And how many proud women
Will cradle your babies?

When your sons no longer bring you
Your carved walking stick
You will lie in the ruins of your hausman
In cold grey ashes and sackcloth
Lamenting your misery and loss.

When your daughters have all fled
To foreign tribes, as unpaid brides
Or refugees of your savagery
None will return to bake kaukau
At your hearth, nor water
To quench your thirst
Thus you will choke
On stale memories of wasted years.

At your last and final repose
With no women to wail, nor kin to console
Nor chiefs to slay pigs in your honor
Your garden lands will be denuded
Divided among your rivals
While your untutored children
Will enter into bondage
To ignobility and shame.
Oh my Penge!

What a precious fool you are
To sell yourself so cheaply
How many good people
Must weep for you?

Sonet 6: Long tulait bai yumi kalapim dispela banis kalabus

Kumul; yu tingim tu taim tulait i buruk?
Antap long Waigani maunten, kapsait olsem ret na gol
Ikam long bilak na bilak skai – stalait i pundaun –

Yu tingim tu ol driman stori mipela ibin toktok?
Taim mipela stap wantaim long bik moning – kol –
Mipela poroman strong tru taim tutak i holim graun;

Dispela taim mipela raunraun nating long laik
Nogat promis, tasol mipela bilip strong tru
Stil paia i stap long pasin; yumi tok aut na tok stret.

Na taim Sana i kirapim dispela paia – traipela lait –
Dispela paia i kamap strong insait long bel trutru
Na mipela save olsem i gat longpela rot i stap yet;

Bai yumi abrusim mak bilong dispela haus kalabus
Taim bel na tingting bilong yumi i kalapim banis.

It's time to clean up the mess

When we were still floating, “In the currents / That swept this land”¹, things were a lot messier than they are now. But, there were less of us to see that. *In fact, we didn't know it was messy.*

Much later it was different “For white man, he came / And our place changed forever”.² Well, mostly. Maybe we gave in too easily and didn't learn how to clean up our own mess, or to not make one at all.

The question is “What happened back then!”³ (?) Everything got white-washed in our pre-Falcongata days. We hid the scandal of ourselves and now for the life of us (or our kids) we can't figure it out!

So every five years we choose who is to be in charge of ‘cleaning up the mess’⁴ left by those others before them. Funny that, because there are familiar faces in this crowd from the last clean-up crew.

And it's always one mess or another. But one learned friend says that that is what we should expect from a vibrant democracy: Individualism vs. Pluralism⁵. *Now we live in a mess created by that schism.*

Do you get that sneaking doubt that somehow you're partly responsible for the disorder too? I do. Maybe it's just me and I should check in at Laloki⁶. I know for sure I didn't check that box!

It's spring-cleaning season again PNG, so if we all get together we can clear out The Mob⁷ we put in charge. That may be a faint hope but it's only as weak as our smallest finger that gets stained with the ink of our guilt.

We've been here on this Treasure Island⁸ for a long while. Not discounting the chaos it's time we made more than a scratch on the pages of history. Time is ticking on, so today, let's make a mark not a mess.

References:

¹ Lines from *A Rower's Song* a poem by Steven Edmund Winduo, from his book *A Rower's Song*, Manui Publishers 2009, Port Moresby PNG.

² Lines from *White man's war* a poem by P. Naringi, published in The National Newspaper Writer's forum on 23 September 2011.

³ *What happened back then* is a poem by Lapieh Landu, published in The Crocodile Prize Literature 12 January 2012 on the website Keith Jackson & Co: PNG Attitude.

⁴ The most recently recycled political rhetoric regurgitated for public consumption.

⁵ See the essay *Theoretical Underpinnings of Development in PNG* by Samil Yapi Yanam, published in The Crocodile Prize Literature 12 January 2012 on the website Keith Jackson & Co: PNG Attitude.

⁶ Laloki is a popular destination for idealists and others who might hear voices inside their heads (Is that my rebellious conscience I hear?).

⁷ Also known as Parliament.

⁸ *Treasure Island* is a novel by Robert Louis Stevenson. Some wise guy said that PNG was "an island of gold floating on a sea of oil".

Where are our leaders?

Where are the Members?

They hide in their chambers.

Where are the morals?

They made Parliament a brothel.

Where are the ethics?

They play Peter's petty politics.

Where are the leaders?

They fake their laurels.

Where are the chiefs?

They cause us grief.

Where are the heroes?

They give us sorrows.

Where is swift justice?

They fired the police.

Where is the court?

They hired lawyers to rot.

Where is the law?

They changed it before.

Who made them the Members?

It was us, you must remember.

Who buried the morals?

It was us gave them the shovel.

Who marred the ethics?

It was us ignored the critics.

Who made them the leaders?

It was us let go the tethers.

Who made them chiefs?

It was us who faked beliefs.

Who made them heroes?
It was us hid the horrors.
Who stalled swift justice?
It was us for political peace.
Who challenged the courts?
It was us took it as sports.
Who changed the law?
It was us gave them the floor.

What do we do for Members?
Our rights must not be surrendered.
What do we do for morals?
Our words and deeds are for all.
What do we do with ethics?
Our Haus is built with its bricks.
What do we do for leaders?
Our brightest and best believers.
What do we do for chiefs?
Our customs are our relief.
What do we do for heroes?
Our democracy is in its death throes.
What do we do for swift justice?
Our aim must be accurate and precise.
What must we do for the courts?
Our laws we must not abort.
What do we do for the law?
Our leaders must arise and be more.

What do you promise to do?

If we give our votes to you
And you form our government
What do you promise to do?

Pledge to us you will be true
And work for our betterment
If we give our votes to you

After all that we've been thru
Our doom seems imminent
What do you promise to do?

To raise us up, to renew
Our ailing parliament
If we give our votes to you

Or will you throw us askew
As others did with a bent
What do you promise to do?

Good leaders are far too few
Our democracy laments
If we give our votes to you
What do you promise to do?

Kap(r)isiousness continues

Alas! The sentence was decreed
To our dirty dozen accused
Who dared to do the dastardly deed
A criminal mind had brewed
Victims now of their capricious creed

Justice has been done
And unstintingly so
We foot the bill and who has won
Penge, what have you to show
The robbery—done, the money—gone

For our new-age Barabbas
An incarcerated Master Thief
Paying a lifetime behind bars
His confessions met with disbelief
One more case-file for barristers

His infamous interview was YouTube fare
Though Kap(r)is was a celebrity for a time
His accusations were deemed unfair
And his star had lost its shine
Of the truth we remain unaware

A convenient scapegoat that wolf became
For justice demands its sacrificial lamb
And punishment for ill-gotten gain
But the taste of that vengeance was bland
The scales we use are not the same

One may still wonder at those names
And consider at the next ballot box
If the character in the poster frame
Represents a true leader or a fox
Make your stand or share the blame.

State of the Public Service

The public service we do - is not known.
The public we do service, - once a month.
The service we do public, - for the boss.
We do the public service. - They pay us.
We service. The public do. - No one cares.
We, the public, do service. - It's all good.
We service. Do the public? - Does anyone?
Do we service the public? - Yes we do!
Do we, the public, service? - Yes, sometimes.
Service the public, do we? - Not today.
Service we do the public - is secret.
Welcome to bureaucracy. - Out for lunch, (back at four).
If you have good ideas, - like I did, (long ago),
When you enter, please leave them - at the door.

Sonet 10: ‘Lele ino mo laikim pinga blong mi

Long taim mi paitim ‘lele bilong mi
Fopla string stap long pinga bilong mi
Mekim swit mo yet singsing bilong mi.

Bihain mi raun long paitim trabel man
Long narapela hap, Buka ailan.
Mi stap, long oda bilong ol kaptan,
Pinga bilong mi pulim masin gun.
Mi kamap olsem wanpela ‘lele string,
Open faia long oda blong gavman.

Mi no save long– ol–no save long mi.
I tru mipela wanpela kantri?
Ol tu paitim ‘lele olsem blong mi...

Bihain mi kam bek long ples bilong mi
‘Lele ino mo laikim pinga blong mi.

Sijo for the Flame of the Forest

A red Flame / hangs from the heights /
 in your proud green / forest home.
Pride you don't feel / nor care to know, /
 you love the glow / of city lights;
Fell your trees / and kill the Flame, /
 sell your green pride / and buy shame.

Sijo for the Sepik

Your forests will be felled, your bush burned
 and your swampland drained out,
To plant palm oil by the hectare,
 to get your share of foreign wealth.
Foreigners will make films,
 to show your grand-kids what you sold off.

Sijo on mining

We have moved mountains
 and dug deep into this earth to find gold
To exchange for paper notes,
 while burying our brothers in filth.
We call development
 the trenches dug between us for wealth.

Sijo on the loss of culture

Strangers teach you to sing songs
 and march to a drum that they own;
To reject your garamut, your kundu
 and the stilled speech of wood;
Their soporific chorus dulls your mind
 and cheats your Black soul.

Sijo on a brother-leader

In those war games we played brother,
 I was always first your friend.
When we stormed Fort Banner, smote our foes,
 and when we leaped from its walls;
It was not so much my leading,
 as you being one step behind.

In light of such wisdom, I am found wanting

There was a battered old kerosene lamp
of which my bubu had inordinate pride
He kept it lit at his bedside mat
besides the firelight at night
I'd always wondered why he'd bothered
to keep that relic of times long past
He'd always wondered why I'd ask
for his purpose seemed sure enough
And although my MagLite made him gasp
he said, "Such things will come to pass".

Awash in fire and lamplight both
we'd sit together of a night
ruminating each on the other's plight
Mine modern –carefree, careless curiosities
His ancient –careworn, careful custodianship.

On those brightly lit city streets
of which I had inordinate pride
Electric bulbs burn overhead
besides the television light at night
Too tired to ponder, why even bother
to regard such technological badges
Those wondrous gizmo's and cool gadgets
for my purpose seemed sure enough
And although my modernity makes me laugh
he said, "Such things will come to pass".

Awash in streetlamps and headlight beams both
there are no quiet sitting places
Every rambling soul has a lonely plight
In a brightly lit city with its haunted inhabitants
or a village hut darkened by my bubu's ghost.

The Tao of Women

In our war of opposite sexes
Consider, arrogant fools, The Tao
Humility gives them their power
There is a time for their submission
They know this, while we look for visions
And praise our own strengths and aggression
Their submission becomes a virtue
Neither as weakness nor as penance
Rather abiding their time; patience.

Their ying to our yang, too oft denied
Their brave hearts hid, suffer our service
Their wise heads bowed to please our power
Their bright eyes dimmed to ease our egos
Yet in their immortal souls –a fire!
And their bodies too, burn with desire
There, in the warm cradle of their womb
And in their arms, our children are borne
A victory over them spells doom.

Who wrongs?

Who's wrong, who's right, who cares?
Problems are a function of existence
We are factorial treatments in an experiment
Where our algebraic values are not given
Therefore, we proportion the vectors
This is how we might rationalize
She left: he right = the ratio of us
And the balance is one.
But we choose abstractions of us
By treating others as a fraction of ourselves,
You left/me right = the quotient of we
Then differentiate to infinity.
If there is no difference or no addition
What is our final summation?
Which algorithm encompasses?
Why apply this mensuration?
Where is the calculus to compute?
The multiplicity of humanity;
The matrices of civilization;
The simultaneous equations of unity;
The absolute value of integration?
But, they \neq us = we, who are one subset.
If this is our non-equation equation for life
Then in all probability our problems may be insoluble.
Who wrongs, who rights, whose care?

The Sum of Our Parts

The Sum of Our Parts

You can be the link that makes us all much stronger than

Single	Couple
Alone	Paired
Each	Both
Unit	Dual
One	Two
Me	We

I Me One Unit Each You Both Dual Two We Us

Me	We
One	Two
Unit	Dual
Each	Both
Alone	Paired
Single	Couple

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One day, in this place, we will have good things

One day, in this place, we will have good things.
Good things will be here and there in this place
Because we now live in a Modern Age.
Our dead ancestors lived in a Stone Age.
And they did not know what we know today.
We can go, do and be where they could not.
We know that there are so many good things.
There are things that we need, others we want.
Here we will all work for them together.
And we will be proud to have built our dreams.
Here there will be a road, and there a bridge,
Because these are good to make folks wealthy.
Here there will be a clinic and a school.
And there will be a manned police station,
Because these are good to keep folks healthy.
The clinic will have clean, well equipped wards
Where a good doctor treats folks, kids and crooks,
Because even culprits get sick sometimes.
The school will have good books and computers,
Because our kids must know much more than us
So that they can fly airplanes from the port
While pastors watch in envy from church doors.
We'll still observe Sabbath, as some folk do,
And we'll work hard at whatever we do.
Here there will be a fresh produce depo,
Because the fresh produce has to be bulked.
Our farms, far better than our ancestors',

Will feed everyone here and elsewhere too.
There will be trade-stores and hardware outlets,
Because goods and stuff need to be traded.
Hard working folk will get paid for their time.
Businessmen, bankers, police and teachers too.
Plumbers, carpenters, mechanics for cars,
Because the roads will need cars and trucks too.
We will have a few poets to mend shoes.
Politicians here will boast of this place,
Because our politicians will work too.
When our friends or tourists come to visit
They will stay at guesthouses or hotels
And their kids will play in the park with ours.
Yes, bring kids too, because playgrounds need kids.
We'll be happy, healthy, wealthy and wise,
Smartly going about our Modern Age lives.
And when we dream at night, our ancestors,
In Stone Age Hausman or Haus Tambaran,
Will watch and listen in on our dream-talk
And they will ooh and aah and say to us
What proud parents we have made them all.
How they knew all along that we could do it.
And they will boast amongst themselves of us.
How they taught us all the good things we know
And how we are as smart as they once were,
Because dead ancestors need to feel pride too,
Now that these dreams belong to our children.
One day, in this place, we will have good things.
Yes, many good things will be here and there,
Because this place is home to good folk too.

A candlelight market in Port Moresby

A distant glimmer welcomes neighboring denizens
To a casual communion among masticating friends
As moths purge themselves upon your candle-flames
Bonfires of electricity blaze over parched n' blackened hills
And the threat of morning is carried by a west-wind chill
Yet nowhere else would we find such cordial respite
From domestic ennui at these hours south of midnight

Your softly flickering tabletops set in neat divisions
Are spread galore for creditors, with familiar provisions
And we are wont to stray on our nightly excursions
To your promise of camaraderie in lite-conversations
When we idly meander from our suburban asylums
Bathe us once again in your charmed candlelit glory
Be our one vestige of hope in this city of opportunity

And what tales do we have of each other to enlighten
Of politics and science, of economics and religion
The mundane amusements of plebeianism
How Nukie-boy betrayed his culpable wife
How she chased him waving her Tramontina-knife
And how the whole community followed after
To the station, to the courthouse and the market thereafter

Mama senis o? Papa istap wankain yet.

Mama wok long gaten – na papa igat pik

Mama wok long gaten – na papa igat bik-nem

Mama wok long gaten – na haus igat kaikai

Mama wok long gaten – na pikini karai long susu

Mama givim susu long bebi – na pikini kamap strong

Mama givim susu long bebi – inap emi wokabout na skul

Mama kukim kaikai – na ol famili kaikai na pulap

Mama kukim kaikai – na ol lain wantok singsing na lap

Mama klinim haus – na ol man i sindaun gut

Mama klinim haus – na olgeta samting istap gut tru

Papa givim bel – na mama wanpis kamap long hausik

Papa givim bel – sotim susu, na kamapim sik

Papa paitim mama – na emi ting olsem em man tru

Papa paitim mama – na pikinini karai long mama tu

Papa mekim long laik – na raun igo inap tulait

Papa mekim long laik – na stailim raun long dei na nait

Mama wok long opis – na papa igat kar

Mama wok long opis – na papa igat bia

Mama wok long opis – na haus igat kaikai

Mama wok long opis – na pikini karai long susu

Mama givim susu long bebi – na pikini kamap strong
Mama givim susu long bebi – inap emi wokabaut na skul

Mama kukim kaikai – na ol famili kaikai na pulap
Mama kukim kaikai – na ol lain wantok singsing na lap

Mama klinim haus – na ol man i sindaun gut
Mama klinim haus – na olgeta samting istap gut tru

Papa givim bel – na mama wanpis kamap long hausik
Papa givim bel – sotim susu, na kamapim sik

Papa paitim mama – na emi ting olsem em man tru
Papa paitim mama – na pikinini karai long mama tu

Papa mekim long laik – na raun igo inap tulait
Papa mekim long laik – na stailim raun long dei na nait

Mama senis o? – Papa istap wankain yet.
Mama senis o? – Papa, senisim tingting long het!

Version City

one kina peanuts
betel nut spewed on dog turds
fat blue flies swarm
beside spilled garbage piles
on a dusty curb in town

ten kina tinned nuts
clean, air-conned glass and tiled floors
bastard urchins rove
guarding remote-locked cars
parked outside a super-mart

Kainkain Siti

wan kina pinat
spet buai long dok pekpek
blu flies i raunim
ples we pipia kapsait
long dust kona blo taun

ten kina tin pinat
klin, air-con glass na tile floor
lus mangi i was
long kar igat masin-ki
sindaun long supamaket

Haibun: ol maket mama

Traipla moning iet na ol mama stap pinis long maket.
Redim kaikai blong salim, makim ples blong ol long
sindaun, na baim kainkain maket fi blong holim pasim spes
blong ol long abinun maket.

Ating liklik wokabout blong mi ino hevi tumas? Mi save
traim skelim wanem kain rot ol bihainim long kisim kaikai
kam, na ol isave silip olsem wanem long long nait?

Ating ol pikini blong ol i save tingim ol tu o? Mi noken
save. Mi ting olsem em i sore samting, tasol ol ino laikim
sore blong mi. Ating moa beta mi baim sampla potato na
kumu long abinun.

san pundaun strong tru,
mas salim potato nau –
free edukesen?

Sonnet 3: I met a pig farmer the other day

At the foot of Mount Giluwe we met
A place where they say ice falls from the sky
We spoke of pork and the lack of good vets
As we toil'd in his village piggery
Each planning how his stock would reach market
Did we both share a wish that pigs could fly?

Agriculture is our backbone we say
(Rhetorical ruse on farmers always)
Yet in our grand plans for development
We have forgotten what that really meant
From the highlands to the coastal islands
The struggle to feed ourselves never ends

If you met those who's unheard voices cry
You too would join me in questioning, why?

The political economy of a pig farmer's life

Until you have seen your hands blistering
Until you have felt sweat break like fever
Before another new gardens planting

Until you have cleaned the piss and manure
Cut, carried and replaced sodden bedding
Until you have closed the sow with the boar

Until then you only have an inkling
Of what a pig farmer does every day
For the fat pig meat that you are eating

You will never know what it means to say
To us, "agriculture is our back bone"
Until you know the sweat and costs we pay

For a simple meal, in our simple home
Sweet potatoes baked around the fire place
Cups of tea with sugar, lucky for some

And every day we hear about your race
To bring development to your people
But we know that your heart has no more space

If you will not share the gris pik with all
One day your house built from our bones will fall.

Two reasons why we dig holes

Burying dead bodies usually takes place
In fancy holes dug on some land space.

Most people dig those holes somewhere nice
But sometimes they don't have a choice.

Some people burn dead bodies to ashes
And this really saves on available land spaces.

Sometimes dead bodies are buried at sea
And slowly sink into muck for eternity.

Other fancy holes are dug large enough,
For the removal of some valuable stuff.

Sometimes these holes are dug somewhere nice
And most times people don't have a choice.

When all the valuable stuff's gone offshore
The hole is back-filled and land space restored.

Today we can dig holes in the seafloor
Right through the eternal muck and more.

Holes should be dug to bury the dead
And to remove valuable stuff instead.

We are not as poor as some people say

Our land is our source of food and our home
We work on our land almost every day
Selling coffee beans is our main income

In remote lands, where tourists find welcome
An old aid post is sixty miles away
Our land is our source of food and our home

Since there are no roads to town from our home
We carry coffee bags most of the way
Selling coffee beans is our main income

We don't just wait for services to come
While struggling to survive another day
Our land is our source of food and our home

Enjoy some coffee when your tour is done
That cup or two of brew gives our days pay
Selling coffee beans is our main income

We own our land and work it, unlike some
We are not as poor as some people say
Our land is our source of food and our home
Selling coffee beans is our main income.

I am the red, red stain

I am the betel nut,
The daga stick
And the lime pot:
I am the red, red stain.

I am the filthy eyesore,
The stained teeth
And the health hazard:
I am the mouth cancer.

I am the free gift,
The girls are garlanded with
And dance to greet:
I am the crowd pleaser.

I am the icebreaker,
The nut of kastom
And first act of the kibung:
I am the nut of peace.

And, I am the nut of conflict,
The urban curse
And the rural blessing:
I am the lifestyle choice.

I am the betel nut,
The daga stick
And the lime pot:
I am the red, red stain.

They say primitive

They think shareholdings
We think sharing.
They speak of levels
We speak of links.

They know salaries
We know subsistence.
They dream of riches
We dream of richness.

They say primitive
We say fundamental.
They see a time
We see a place.

They want tomorrow
We want today.
Their life is complexity
Our life is simplicity.

They need all conveniences
We need few essentials.
They will take everything
We will have nothing.

Exiting a hotel in the Pacific

My home is not your tourist attraction,
No supermarket for colourful trinkets and toys.
Our bows and arrows still kill game and foes, on untamed
reservations where we rule.
We planted yar trees for millennia before your cowboy
carbon trading.

My home is not your adulterous playground,
No sweetshop/sweatshop for pedophilic migrants or
philanthropic vagrants.
Our living cultures are to be observed with reverence for
the savage dignity of our ancients.
We will not bow to foreign gods no matter what your
enticements.

My home is not your smorgasbord menu,
No delicatessen for your conspicuous consumption.
Our rural livelihoods have kept us fed despite your urban
avarice.
We are utterly biodegradable, while even your manure lasts
for eons.

My home is not for your upper-crust business class citizens,
No blithe, blind, blunt, neo-barbarian brute should sun bake
on our beaches or bathe in our mountain spas.
Our natural habitats are not a hospital for the sick and
handicapped refugees of modernity.
We never put a 99 year lease on the air we breathe.

My home is not for your capitalist considerations,
No value added, duty free, WTO compatible tax holiday
trade agreement for my homelands.
Our lives belong to the land, unlike your vain, Viagra, vice
versa value system.
We gave generational blood, sweat and tears to our land for
which cash is no recompense.

My home is not your hotel in the Pacific.

There, sails my peace: There, soars my soul
There, sings my blood: There, stirs my bones:
There, sweets my dreams: There, sleeps my love
There, stands my home.

Acknowledgements

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- The Musing of an Assistant Pig Keeper, ISBN-13: 978-1490505978 (CreateSpace-Assigned); ISBN-10: 1490505970
- The BBC 2014 Commonwealth Games Poetry Postcards
- Soaba's Storyboard <http://soabasstoryboard.blogspot.com.au/>
- Poetry Soup, www.poetrysoup.com
- Stella Magazine (PNG)
- PNG Resources Magazine
- The National Newspaper Writer's forum (the column was discontinued)

Reviews

“A poem is a powerful weapon, especially in the hands of a master like Michael Dom. One day the politicians will rue their deafness.”

*Phil Fitzpatrick
Author & publisher Pukupuk Publishing*

“I assure you that you will experience the anguish and mischief of PNG politics in your mind’s eye and equally a hope for a brighter future in this work.”

*Kelakapora Sil Bolkin
Author of *The Flight of the Galkope**

“...the end result of struggle may be a real threat to privilege and entitlement. Michael Dom uses poetry to reveal such truths without ever glossing over the difficulties of moving to a better state.”

*Keith Jackson AM – Adjunct Professor
School of Journalism & Communications
The University of Queensland*