

MAY 29, 2017

Arnold Bathersfield is a poetic instrument of the higher forces of Life. This is how he sees himself, as an instrument. He has seen himself in this way for so long that his works reflect the air of duty. If he should hold his peace, the very stones will cry out. That is duty.

.He began publishing in 1979 when his "I" ME" "YOU" was released by Beyond Publications. It is a volume of poems, and short stories, with a foreword by Dr Joan Bathersfield, his spouse and partner. She helps the reader by introducing him as one who thinks of himself as "a universal man." His concern with the fullness of human personality comes out in the very first poem. It is his great disclaimer-disclaiming any virtue or talent and seeing himself as an instrument of the Divine, yet a human instrument. with free will He frequently falls back on the instrument posture of worshipful deferment, to higher forces. stepping back in the full storm expression to place limits on his own being.

His verse defies the wicked works of earthly powers, gives his own ego no chance for vaunting itself. In fact, one does not recognise an ego in this poet using the language of the street and the sentiments of sublime thought all in one strange, arresting mix. as his mode or vehicle of communication.



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"Giving thanks
To the breath and fire within me
Giving thanks 'to the Law of God within me."

In this first poem, in his first collection, the writer returns to an ancient belief system past those inherited by the descendants of the enslaved from whom he was born. These offspring had all been westernized, with the exception of about a number per thousand who retained their ancestral attitudes, as in Comfa, Poco Mania, Vodun and Shango in the Caribbean. In these few lines, ages of theological and philosophical experience are enfolded, especially when he goes on to say, "As I take refuge in substance, force and spirit, " this poet of Peace takes refuge in force- but it is not harmful force, but the indwelling force, which permeates Life. He does more than enough to explain his direction and the likelihood that the reader may find parts of him mysterious or obscure. Yet, in his third poem in this maiden volume, the poet of Peace declares War

"On this my anniversary
War with the head
war with the neck
war wit the stomach..
War allover again
To create a new
"I", "You" and "Me".

"I", "You" and "Me".

The reader must explore the subtle difference between the "I" and the "Me".

but there is for him a cherished and significant difference.

This first page, however, gives the key to much of what Arnold Bathersfield has written and perhaps will write in the future. It is hard to explore his production, since by the time the amateur, part-time critic gets down to what is known there is something new. What is new is really not what he writes, but why he writes, the particular reason why he has written yet again, for he does not write in the abstract. His writing is a reason, an alert, a warning, and a guide, to a seemingly overwhelming environment of human effort, often failure, and sometimes an effort worthy of celebration. The most recent of such efforts as we shall see later was the farewell rites for of Errol Bathersfield, his cousin, when Arnold at the Church service unfolded one of his most typical creations.

STOP

Other critics, like Joan Bathersfield, help to clear the way and clarify .

In her introduction to his second volume, "Stay Up "I" Within," she goes farther than in her preface to the first. She writes, "Liberation of oppressed

peoples is a recurring theme in Bathersfield's works. Thus in the poem "Oppressor", the oppressor reaches into the subconscious even "in the marketplace where his heirs of exploitation try to domesticate the being."

These are powerful insights typical of Bathersfield. He does not see the anti human behaviour only where it originates, but watches its abstract metabolism in the society passing from cell to cell. He can sense where it has won converts. This part of his strength is his alertness to those hostile influences, which are brought from elsewhere into the people's experience.

Like a musician, Arnold Bathersfield suits his language and meter to the occasion and audience. The Voice is mostly his, but he can parody the ridiculous mighty at times, churning out their verbiage with impish delight. The indignation in his voice is strongest against the strongest, but he also feels a duty to chide the weak, asking them to think again, or look again and by asking questions they may have failed to ask themselves. So, unlike the Biblical missionaries, he wrestles against spiritual wickedness in all places.

He has a keen eye and ear for persons, in the sense of unique persons in the sense that he finds virtue

everywhere and is the least arrogant of thinkers. It is almost as though he carried a banner saying "Soul, affirm your singularity or be lost. " I differ, therefore I am, is another theme that arises. from his prolific production, - not referring to himself only, for he has so much affinity with All, -but to all individual beings.

Why then does he pillory wickedness in high places when those officials and human organs imposing multiple tortures on humanity are also human beings with their own minds or with a group or corporate mind?

Bathersfield is in fact a philosopher in disguise. Poetry is a passion, but in effect he employs poetry not to sing the well-known beauty of the stars from another angle, but to beautify the human world by a fire purge. The poetic techniques do escape from his hand at times when he chooses to be conventional, but always conventional with a point. Poetry with a point is his purpose.

The tribute to Wilfred Bathersfield is a model essay, not as an essay but as an example of filial culture. and affectionate appreciation of a man from whom his own activity was so distinguished. "he did not initiate political discussion as I I did with him..He did not understand my personal and political stand in 975 but later he did ,but I got the

word through a friend of his. That's his way. I respected it then and love him in spite of his ideology. " Tongue in cheek, mocking his own long absence from Guyana and not too impressed by hard line stay-at-homers, he addresses his father

A hero to some-because you created a way
A stalwart to many because you kept the faith with
dignity and pride
Guyana is for Guyanese
Am "I" alien?
We salute your "Being,"

He revisits his own work. His rod of correction is impartial and goes back and revises tiny details, which seem to misrepresent fact or conscience, sometimes for reasons not easily fathomed. But this behavior occasionally employed is another sign that the report knows the power of example, and wants to be as just as he demands of the Powers to be.. Thus he revises "Freddie Claims" page 42 in "Stay Up" "I": Within, asking us to read I saw the solar spectrum, torture chambers, barbed wires
chemical warfares, genetic engineering, the chains the
Fears, persecutions, fire hoses, police dogs, tear gas, pepper gas, night sticks, sterilizations, floggings, banishments, denial of rights"

In place of'

I saw the solar spectrum, torture chambers, barbed
wires,
Chemical warfares, genetic engineering, the chains,
the fears, persecutions,
Sterilizations, floggings, banishments, denial of
rights"

His fairness informs us of Martin Carter 's (his
countryman's) "impartial Ox " that does not care
whose field it ploughs. His antennae vibrate at truth
even remotely signalled.

Showing the indifference of blind power, Carter
asks the complacent

"Think you*****"

"Oppressor" is one of the shorter poems and one
not in the style of the
bulk of those for the human Billboard. It sums up
Bathersfeld's deep instincts against oppressive rule
and meddling authority which sooner or later
grows into direct oppression

You are drilling away at my being, oppressor
In my sleepS
In my dreamS The "eye" caught y ou probing at the
subconscious.
In the market place your heirs of exploitation try

To domesticate "being"
I am steadfast---
'Loving culture and liberation
Oppression--terror rains
And the people have identified youŠ
Oppressor.

This poem was not surprisingly selected by Dr Joan Bathersfield as specially typical of the poet's sensitive vision. To add to her comment, it is not far-fetched to suspect that Bathersfield knew enough about technology to fear or rather apprehend its use as a means of invasion of the privacy of thought

Her critique (with permission)

In Being-the Name Of the game..
To give some evidence of the movement 1984-2004 here is an introduction by this reviewer to Batherfkd's IN BEING- The Name of the Game " published in 1984.

Introduction:

"The Name Of The Game" as a title does no justice to the social purpose and seriousness of this volume of Verse and Prose by Arnold Bathersfield. The title sounds like some hand book on "How to Make It In A Self-Seeking World."

When you understand the author's method, you will find that this misunderstanding suits his purpose.

It suits him because, deep in his mind, it is exactly the weak, not too well self-organized person who needs to be shown some other view of the purpose and possibilities of his or her personality.

In the first piece in the book, a prose piece, the reader catches a glimpse of what, for many, life in North America seems to be about. It is indeed a game. But the immigrant character John Banks, excited at first at the comforts and low level influence and cash his countryman Mike Baptiste has assembled, finds that his dreams for himself cannot come true in "the busy schedule of dinners, dances, conferences and fast talk."

Arnold Bathersfield uses as his raw material many such "games." His poems--and they are poems of a new type--are based in the depths of human shock, conflict failure, disillusion. This is where he wants the reader, because these are the issues that first compel many of us to reflect on the purpose of our existence. It is then that most of us first ask "How did I happen to be here?" "What is the most useful relationship between the world and me?" "What disciplines do I need in order to serve a positive purpose?" His issues are not posed in political terms. He takes a revolution for granted. For him,

the destiny throughout the Americas and the Caribbean is "Revolution or Death." The question^s ^{are} is, how are the victims of non-revolution to sense their own personal and individual responsibilities, how are they to overcome petty frustration of the individual psyche to join at once in the recreation of a genial world with enough accommodation for the millions whose labour supports privilege.⁷

No, he does not lay down the law, nor give advice. He goes to his task by singing the glories of self-examination, self-conflict, self-overcoming. He proclaims, "nobility is as noble does." Nobleness is not a standard fixed by the most saintly. It is the daily victory over our own failings and shortcomings. Thus he offers all humanity a place in the nobility of the spirit.

In "vision" he puts his method to the test. After two years of deep study of himself he can see the difference between human beings in general and himself in particular what he calls the "me". It does not come without a struggle of opposites and raging conflict. He chides himself for his part in the explosion, and regrets that others had to suffer pain for his "purification."

After that what he has been "dies"--a detailed and particular death "No pulsating, No reflecting, No thinking I am dead^S" It is tempting to suggest that

this death announcement is a backhanded way of announcing a rebirth after the explosion at the end of the season.

His short-story games show his interest from a new angle. Of the three in the volume one, two are based in his native country, Guyana, and all treat Guyanese characters either in their own surroundings or abroad. One which relies on scenes from his childhood, "Saila" (Sailor) is written with a truth which comes from the full acceptance of personality as it is. The story quickly achieves the standing of art. There is in it, too, a welcome lack of village tribalism--for who boasts of a fellow villager of such recommendations? This is a valuable lesson for Guyanese abroad and perhaps for the Caribbean community in the U.S.A. as a whole. Truth is the basis of trust.

The inclusion of "Happenings" supports my argument that these poems and stories must not be seen as "spiritual", too subjective, or too personal. It is another proof of commitment against all levels of oppression and of concern with as many sides of reality in our human fate of struggling with opposites. Reagan's dismissal of life is an imposing part of that reality with the power of imposing public and private pain.

For an immigrant community which includes Latin Americans, Caribbean peoples, Asians, Africans, in struggle in a strange land there is another reading. Just as individuals develop their personality in personal and public interaction, so do human groups and we are concerned with freedom--seeking groups. It is not far-fetched to read into the person--centered games, which are the method of this book, the political need for national liberation movements to examine themselves, lose their faults and settle on healthy estimates and healthy relations with one another and with oppressed communities with life long attachment to the soil of the U.S.A.

There is a lot more the reader will discover as a reward for even a first reading of this album of animated snapshots. Be warned, that if you object, protest, disagree violently and try to develop counter theories, you are just playing into his hands.

--Eusi Kwayana

From 1979 to the present, the mood has only matured. The statement that the poems should not be seen as "spiritual" needs revision for they are works of a deep spirituality. What ^{he} should he said by way of revision is that they should not be seen

as religious or as sermons. The cautionary quotes notwithstanding, it was a misstatement, intended to advise those who brought aside art as bad for expressing a point of view or betraying a world outlook. The works are all imbued with the writer's closet spirituality, closet in the sense that he does not proclaim it from the housetops, but cannot control its imprint on his utterances. In other words, it is the result of a vain striving to remain ordinary. His entrapment is that he is ordinary by intent but not in the qualities his influences have developed—parents, spouse, offspring, mentors, friends and opposite and oppressors.

Reflecting on "Just Us", seemingly an ancestor in his father's line, and one whom Bathersfield describes " "Just Us" was a radical", he offers a good example of his billboard, street language technique.

Destructive weaponry,
Annihilation, space stations, space
medicine, satellite communication'
and they say my tongue my tongue
'but' I can taste
Freedom, totalitarianism, mind
bending drugs, electronic
Surveillance, high prices, affluence,
Affirmative action, drug culture,
Jails, crimes, forced labourŠ

Repression, police state
Decadence ,laws, lawlessness video
Tele shakedown, competition among competitors
(and the his horrors)
universal product code-implanted in
'the mind, test tube reproduction, selective cloning,
genetic engineering, university training
selective discipline and one becomes'
ill-disciplined in a discipline, the
count down translated into dollars 'sub -divisions,
have and the have-nots
and they say my tongue my tongue
but 'I ' can taste
"Just U s" was a radical.
Root.

He uses the billboard to celebrate as well as social
advances

Leonard Peltier -sentenced to two consecutive life-
life-Twenty-four years to date-date-stay focused
Me, killing men, women shouting, children
walking nature expanding, I am wounded.,

Some This volume is dedicated to the will of fallen
comrades prose wroitgs and soe billboard verse for
the watchfulness of the people.

His clips of the tensions of poverty are familiar for
the almost middleclass:

Victimized economically- medical insurance, Car-
insurance, Property insurance, no Personal
insurance, though-continues

Zapatistas on the move-on the move-

State of Chiapas-Chiapas

Electronic civil disobedience

The death penalty debate-continues continues -
con-tinues'

DNA testing-the key-the key

Mexican mass movement- movement-

Protesters on naval base -

On Vieques, Vieques

Be vigilant-be vigilant

Computerized resistance-resistance

Teemner the Maya-Achi community of Rio Negro,
massacre in 1982

By the Guatemala military-military

Oh Guatemala-Guatemala

When death ceases to be death- death-

"Then I am wounded" we see him as a litmus
test of life .

I am wounded, no blood, What I touch I am
wounded

Who funds it? funds it?-funds it

Death penalty debate

continues-con-tinues-con-tinues-

DNA testing-the key the key-

Review-review-review-

The chapter continues-

Mumia Abu-Jamal and others on death row-
The prison population has reached , 2000,000 on 2
Twenty five per cent of whom are black and other
oppressed peoples
Be vigilant
ne person death row-
her

In his billboard works his poetic techniques are contrast, anti-climax, irony and rhythm with occasional rhyme. But the high seriousness, one of the celebrated marks of poetry is always present. His use of street style and street language is an effort at instant understanding in a population ready for soundbites. . He aims at the persons who are not aware of an interest in poetry with a capital P. Thus is a Church audience he is zealous and willing to affect those at first half-attending with collateral fire. It is the method of the cinema, the video with scenes flashing before the eye-mind to dispel the tendency to forget. It is the rhythm of the drum as those will know who have seen him or others perform his poetry. It should be said that the bulk of them are written to be performed with drum. Then the syncopation of drum, and verse make the information and pictures available to the audience. He pleads

Analyze-make your own decisions-
Be receptive to information-research-research-Who

is Frederick Lindemann?-
Drum, drum, drum.

Remember Greenwood -Tulsa.Oklahoma,
Lynching, massacre, and the destruction of a
neighborhood

May 30,1921-

An estimated 300 African Americans died-
Rep.a.ra.tion is alive-

"His prose is sometimes moving. Freed of the
confines and discipline of verse it is a better outlet
for spelling out his humanism, which takes as one
of its expressions appreciation of others. His
essays on Mrs Princess London Williams and on
the Guyanese musician Mr.Tom Charles betray a
his willingness to value individuals for their good.
And he is wounded when these losses occur.
The matriarch, Princess London Willliams When
they passed on he would certify their fidelity and
the ancestors, hopefully would set aside poular
malice and give due recognition the
ewcomwers.liams, sowed seeds of love,
forthrightness fortitude ,brilliance tranquility and
benevolence, with charisma and poise. her legacy
will be preserved through her siblings., offspring
and friends .So do not weep, stand firm; stay
focused ŠTake heed she will be watching.-In the
millennium Be in One-Always." Charisma? She
was a simple huckster who became a housewife

resident in the USA and turned all her children into professionals. This did not hide her vitality from the keen younger poet, who felt it was a duty to remind the world, her world what it would lose with her departure.

Paul Robeson had declared his understanding of the artist's role. It was to remain firmly in the ranks of the workers and the people. He had said "I have no alternative."

Bathurst is an amateur artist. He too has allowed himself no alternative. In this mould are Sonia Sanchez, Danny Glover and the redoubtable Harry Belafonte.

He has appointed himself other duties, however. His lines to his grandmother, like to those to Sister Princess Williams, bearing out this respect for those who are marooned at the base of the economy.

His stand was not only to take a stand which he often did by way of epithet, irony, reminders, flash backs, contrast, -often pleading non involvement with statement, "This writer is only asking.

He is not only asking, but is asking us to ask.

His work can be classified as returning to the concerns of the period in European history called romantic, when poets again returned to the

discovery of those cast of by
Social forces. He sings of the nobility of the
unknown., the un- people. .All people need
recognition ,but those without a profile need it even
more. A young poet in the making who was
perhaps never made, Enid Major, wrote in a poem
in the early fifties

"if the Big things need attention,
The little things need still more'

She was from the poorest ranks and was a member
of the Demerara Youth rally, within the ambit if
the united People' Progressive party. Regrettably,
the responsables did not think it merited
publication. Yet the unrhymed free-verse
lines are a market for today's major international
political problems.

It is as though he had a pact with the ancestors to
write certificates of appreciation or testimonials of
fidelity to those who left the scene without fanfare-
with fanfare too but those bereft of national
fanfare were his major responsibilities.

Arnold Bathersfield, unlike his namesake in the
Governor's ,mansion in California has led him not
only to celebrate he wretched of the earth, but to
castigate by mean "of his choosing" from time to
time, those who endanger their lives and imperil
their future. and that of the Earth.

Leading billboard poems-it may not be a fair
description - is Bhagdad boom. He let slips his
overpowering interest in public education., that

people should understand the manoeuvres of the powerful:

You understand the dynamics..

Axis of Evil, Iraq North Korea, Iran Peoples

What about Secretary of State Powell's rhetoric and dilemma

What about Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld's defiance and European fiasco

What about sound bite diplomacy and diversions

Truth has surged

Cyber-warfare virtual reality

A new level

But the stars will fall and the sun stop shining

Then he takes the swing-

What about unattended domestic issues, homelessness, health care

Education, jobs, internal security

What about Al Qaeda, and Osama Bin Laden..

What! About Reparations

What about Reparations..

How can we recapture human lessons in particular, Peace

World leaders ..This writer for peace is just asking

On behalf of the peoples universally--and nature..

Is there room for conscientious objectors students and

Deserters? Baghdad boom---2

Baghdad Boom 2

Baghdad on fire

Emasculated emperors are on the move

He makes new use of contract and antithesis in the way he recalls , instructive the drift of public policy and the signs of callousness among the class of men that rules the world. He also does not spare the rod of satire choosing to reveal their doomsday - like successes as they shower their latest blessings on the defenceless peoples; [how Christian they are in bragging about their charity].

His Black Distortion Is it a Problem ?; as
aforeword by John Cromwell ,who deems it "One
of the first bibliographies of its kind?"., This clever
and well conceived tract seeks to give reason to
the generation inheriting "Afros , Power salutes,
,Dashiki and cries of 'Power Brother'" a
grounding in where these things came from and
have been left as a legacy by previous
generations., Thus it is a bibliography and more.It
outlines as briefly as possible the distortion of
Africa's role in the world and gives lists of works
which will go a far way to correct the distribution,
This little work should be in the hand if every
student at a cheap rate

His tribute to Errol Bathersfield, his cousin and
friend held a packed congregation spell bound
,Making yet another use of his virtual cinema
technique,in which the fleeting images are written
for speaking, leaving the rest to the persona and

individual imagination Here then is a poet and essayist who writes not for the elite ,or not only for elites but who bears in mind and it seems especially caters for those whose lives do not ;allow them the leisure of ongoing research>it is these endless thousands that his technique and style have been matured and are still being refined to empower. .He is an intellectual labour saving device for those whose back breaking work, unlike his own, for their livelihoods, or who like sections of the fun-bombarded youth whose average day deprive them of the advantage and resource of instant detection of the hidden signs of the arrogance and contempt of Power.

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