

Notes to Selections from The Political Poetry

After his arrival in Chile during World War II, Totila wrote a series of short poems collected under the common title: “Hymns of the Thrice Ours” (Dreimal Unser). He regarded them as verbal posters, screams of protest at the war and mostly at the sickness of human affairs of which the war was the symptom.

The core of our collective troubles, as Totila saw it, was the patriarchal mind and the patriarchal society that perpetuated it. Christianity, arisen in the realm of Caesar, had, according to Tótila, compromised with the patriarchal order, in that it failed to address itself to the crucial issue in the welfare of our planet: the healing of human relationships, which in Patriarchy are lacking in father-mother-child balance at the psychological, social and political levels. Thus, the expression, “thrice ours”: in reference to the Lord’s prayer and with a composite meaning of “our father”, “our mother” and “our child” according to his view of the three-foldness of our nature (from the structure of our bodies to that of the biological family and that of our psyche).

After having realized the harmonization of his own inner nature throughout the process that had unfolded since the beginning of writing and culminating in the experience of self-birth, Tótila was understandably perceptive of the disharmony characteristic of unregenerate mind, and now the catastrophe of the war had become the trigger for a turning toward society in his poetry.

After his return from Germany it had been understandably frustrating for him to continue writing in German in a Spanish speaking country, and the outcome of this communication lapse was Tótila’s next work: a volume of a hundred and twenty poems entitled *Epopeya del Tres Veces Nuestro*, which in spite of

its title was not strictly an epic work except in its proportions and in the fact that its subject: the patriarchal world and collective transformation. It was not well received by the writers and amateur poets in town to whom he showed the manuscript – and understandably so, for in most poems there creeps something of the foreigner in his use of language, and also their meter doesn't flow according to usual poetic practice in Spanish. (When I once told Tótila that I thought so too, he remarked that his Spanish was that of a twelve year old – which had been his age when he left Santiago for Berlin.)

It was, I think, as a consequence of this second frustration as a poet in Chile that Tótila wrote a condensed prose statement of his trinitary conception of the human being, regarding it a prologue to the epic. I am included this statement as a first selection in this section.

Gesang aus drei Selen was written at a much later time – between 12/29/54 & 03/13/55. It is a poem cycle comprising three smaller cycles of 24 poems each entitled: *Filiachat, Matriarchat, and Patriarchat* in which Tótila – again in verse and in German – articulates his vision of the “three principles” as he saw them manifest in the unfolding of human history and in human life at present.

In his vision of a matriarchal antecedent to patriarchal civilization Totila had been inspired by Bachoffen's work (though I am sure that he never came to know any of the anthropology confirming the existence matri-lineal societies today). Going beyond Bachoffen's hypothesis of a “matriarchal” epoch, however, Totila (like Engels, though not aware of it) envisioned a still earlier time where the values of youth dominated over those of age, and in which the “child” component of the human psyche was dominant.

Tótila envisioned our collective history as the expression of three imbalances that had been necessary responses to survival constraints, and believed that we have come to a time when the most recent of these – the patriarchal order – has become not only obsolete but essentially lethal.

Unlike those who have conceived the desirability of a return to the matristic spirit, however, he claimed that “human nature” is not anything that we have known yet, in the course of the limitations of archaic and anarchic child centeredness, the exaggeration of matristic group tyranny or patriarchal despotism. Thus his vision of the future was not so much a “return to paradise” as the possibility of an integration of our collective psyche; an integration which, having come to know in his own mind, he saw as potentially accessible to all. Needless to say, such a vision implies the notion that we can only come to a healthy world community through inner transformation—a collective inner transformation which he envisioned as humanity’s overriding task.