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WHICH WAY JUSTICE?  
(FOR ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA)

by

Lourdes Sison Pammit

The British say the scales of justice even out  
with the good poised triumphant on top  
yet a Russian Count born to a wealth of serfs  
had seen justice suffer in its grinding way  
found it was not hastened by impassioned words  
nor by tears poured on wounds calling for redress.

A stoop-shouldered man with sensitive fingers  
that probed musty books in the London archives  
wrote not of blindfolded justice balancing scales  
but of brawny hands taking their tools to arm  
over the sacrosanct gates of the Titled  
to level with their feet the divine position of rank.

Which way justice?  
the whiteman's blindfolded lady  
that hears the cries  
but never the hand  
that shackles another  
weighing the scales  
imperturbably not seeing evil?  
Or the justice that calls  
blood for blood  
the old biblical:  
an eye for an eye?

To everything there is a season  
but not for all-time suffering.  
The time when thrown stones  
were gathered to form prison walls  
must make way for the time  
when same stones leave their victims  
to return with originators' intent.

A kindly heart is open to treachery  
A forgiving nature is easily appeased  
An open and trusting hand is soon bound  
by steel grips that do not know of kindness  
but despise what appears to be meek.

Which justice can redress  
 a century of infamy?  
 wipe the blood  
 bring back the dead  
 straighten the deformed  
 dry the tears  
 cried so long  
 they had formed rivers?

The Count is still right  
 infinite though his love for man;  
 despite the apocalyptic dreams of an expatriate  
 whichever way justice:  
 a dream deferred is irreversible.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Lourdes Sison Pammit is a Filipino graduate student in  
 African Area Studies at UCLA.*