

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.

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