

Officium Tuum

by Steven Rinehart

EDITOR'S NOTE: Although the Bar Journal has rarely published poetry in the past, the editorial board has decided to do so again, with this recently-submitted piece. The judicial representatives on our editorial board would like to point out that the miscarriages of justice at the expense of St. Joan, Jean Valjean, and Jesus Christ, referenced in line sixteen of the poem, were not miscarriages of justice for which actual judges were responsible, but rather abuses of ecclesiastical, police, and executive power, respectively.

Before the bench, they each are tried, the endless, insolent hordes;
Their misdeeds they each deny; each as you sharpen Justitia's sword.
Deaf are you to their cries, and numb is your heart with power and pride;
The sins they disavow moot not the doom tattooed upon their brow.
The time 'tis nigh to denounce their crimes, and quell them with your hand supreme;
Then consign them to the tick of time, and crush their lives' esteems.

With a pen stroke you adjourn, *lex talionis* moves them each in turn.
Seventy-times-seven notches on your gavel; cobwebs on your soul;
Away the rabble straggle shackled, your apathy their brazen bull.
At your behest the invisible hand dispossesses their res upon command;
Through decades blurred by endless tears, steel to gild their jubilee;
As you climb the stairs of your career to the apogee of your esprit.

But whose dignity is put to stocks by the lucidity of your decree?
Must you put a chisel to the cenotaph of their hate for you?
Do your trysts with the poltergeists of Pilate, Freisler and de Sade,
Condone the sacrifice betrayed of Joan of Arc, Valjean and Christ?
No thought allot you kin and kith? For naught be *odio judex careat*?
For naught the casualties of faith in the court's timocracy.

Rich are they on blame and shame and richer still on pain unfeigned.
Did you see them frolic in their youth in their mother's sweet embrace?
What of the friend you failed, mistruth you spoke, or dollar you displaced?
They too dreamt of love and rings and shrove before the King of Kings;
And in a soft voice prayed you'd save, some judgment to the courts above.
May tomorrow's sorrow and this rhyme eclipse the grip of vengeance thine.

For the beauty lost to them, in grace's name, that they be redeemed;
When condemned they sweat in streams, erase though stained and grant in time what's lost regained;
That your robes gleam white with sunlight's rays to allay the dread today purveyed;
And in magnanimity you shed, that light to those whose plight you wend.
Rouse the benignant Lares few, then mercy dare to figment in thy view;
Let this prayer for your wisdom stand, a light worth saving in every man.

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