

Or In Any Other Way

A performed dedication for 'The Jurors' by Hew Locke June 15th,
2015

The sound of footsteps approaching from many directions. The sound of a boat
cutting against a river, wheels on a rough road.

Each speaker recites their verse while approaching the camera and the artwork. All
continue advancing after they have spoken, forming a tightening ring around the
artwork.

A young black woman emerges from the trees.

I

In every human beating breast¹ the love of freedom lives, impatient of
oppression's print it pants deliverance -

which only words that break cement² have the power to give.

II

But words are weak as well as strong, they die upon the air, and commerce
can enslave the heart that once was feathered fair.³

For in the middle passage who will hear, who will care?⁴

A young black man comes into view.

An Asian woman appears from behind the tea rooms.

¹ A versification of phrases from a letter written by Phyllis Wheatley to the Indian Minister
Rev Occum - 'for in every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call love of
Freedom; it is impatient of oppression, and pants for Deliverance'

² 'Just like Solzhenitsyn, I believe that in the end the word will break cement.' –Nadezhda
Tolokonnikova, in her closing statement at the Pussy Riot trial

³ Reference to Egyptian scales that weighed the heart against an ostrich feather at the end of
a person's life

⁴ Reference to the case of the Zong, when live slaves were thrown overboard by the sailors
during the middle passage of the slave trade route.

III

But words are strong as well as weak, like carvings on a tree, they sing to those who mark them down and those still yet to be.⁵

For humanness is in the 'look' as much as in the 'see'.⁶

IV

And like the piano tuner who stalks his temperament, so we can seek our equal notes, our words to represent.⁷ For knowledge is like water held without the words to vent.⁸

V

And whatever heaven you hold within your body, your head, its sight is through the people's eyes despite oppression's lead.⁹ The only prison is that of fear, the fear of what is said.¹⁰

A man in a wheelchair approaches down the road.

A man appears wearing a 'coat of shabby grey'

⁵ Reference to the Boab prison tree at Hillgrove, Australia, marked with carvings by those imprisoned there, also the use of the tree in this way disturbing the songlines of the land

⁶ Reference to Confucian idea of Ren - Human-ness & Confucian quote - 'he who seeks it has already found it.'

⁷ Reference to Ben Purse, the piano tuner who led the first London march of the blind - also to terms used in piano tuning such as 'equal temperament'

⁸ Reference to Amerindian land rights - 'the land of many waters'. Also to the idea that laws and protest allow what is known by the remote tribesmen about illegal logging and mining to be known by the rest of the world.

⁹ These lines are a version of a quote from Gao Yao, Minister for Law in prehistorical China, from an admonishment of his king - 'Heaven can see and hear, and does so through the eyes and ears of the people'

¹⁰ Reference to quote from Aung San Suu Kyi - 'The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear.'

A Burmese woman comes into view.

VI

Yet each man kills the thing he loves – ¹¹ The stricken ship spills its oil upon
the sea that made it whole,¹² so we will tear and spoil

the best of us that makes us man the best that makes us royal.

VII

Even now we become unmoored, cast off our best creation like throwing
children overboard.¹³ But the rule's venation

is hardy – grained within our wood in spite of what we've done.¹⁴

VIII

And not just for men but women, too, however veiled their dress. ¹⁵ For what
is a law that only applies to half of us?¹⁶

A scar, that's what, upon itself, a gain become a loss.

¹¹ Famous returning line in Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Gaol'

A young Indian woman appears.

A refugee emerges from a boat moored on the river bank.

A South African man approaches.

¹² Reference to Exxon Valdez disaster, and promise of Exxon executive to the people of Alaska that 'you have my word we will make you whole again.'

¹³ Reference to recent witness accounts from migrants at sea off the coast of Italy - specifically about children being thrown overboard when food and drink became scarce.

¹⁴ Reference to the idea of the Golden Rule as a consistent moral code running through all cultures, times and religions. Magna Carta as a surfacing of this, not a creation of a new idea.

¹⁵ Reference to Cornelia Sorabji, first Indian female lawyer and her work with excluded women ¹⁶ Reference to Magna Carta, clause 39 and its referring to men only

IX

But words are strong as well as weak, and in their death, revive. Their light shines through the censor's ink, when torn they still survive.

For freedom looks towards the sun so in the darkness, thrives.¹⁷

A young man emerges from the American Bar Association monument.

X

So laws are words, and words are us and speech has set us free. But what when laws become our chains in name of liberty?¹⁸

When mouths are watched, and tongues are cut, how then does Justice see?

XI

A dancing leader needs the led,¹⁹ their heart as well as hand, and in this way justice can live, and we can make our ground - with words and witness, 'til

all we sought, can now be found.

A child appears.

A young woman appears.

¹⁷ Reference to Nelson Mandela's quote that he always kept his head 'pointed towards the sun'

¹⁸ Reference to comments on free speech and privacy limitations in the name of defending democracy by Edward Snowden

¹⁹ Reference to Lillie Lenton, suffragette campaigner. She trained as a dancer before her campaigning life.

XII

And should a bullet pierce the brain²⁰ its thoughts will still live on, and all the more if those ideas are grown from 'Us', hand-spun.²¹

So this is how our justice flows, and this is how it's won.

All the speakers are now converging upon the artwork together. As they circle around the chairs, they recite the final lines.

XIII

So this is how our justice flows, and this is how its won. With strength of mind and strength of word, and in a thousand tongues. A tale of 'Us' and not of 'You' across the nations sung.

Yes, this is how our justice flows, and this is how its won.

A tale of 'Us' and not of 'You' across the nations sung.

This is how our justice flows, and this is how its won.

They build to a climax, then each speaker sits on one of the 12 chairs. Silence

²⁰ Reference to letter by Harvey Milk anticipating his own assassination where he says 'If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door in the country.'

²¹ Reference to Ghandi's spinning wheel for hand-spun cotton.