

Enduring Justice

Thomas Roma's book of photographs taken at the Brooklyn Criminal Court building, *Enduring Justice* (PowerHouse, \$40), is a study in despair and survival. Here *Talk* presents the book's foreword. **BY NORMAN MAILER**



suggests it will never dissolve. You are in the pits and you are enduring it.

Justice is the smell in the smoke of the bail bondsman's cheap cigar as the fumes drift down the dire corridors; justice is the look in the judge's eye when he is debating whether to call another recess for his bladder; justice is the look your woman gives as she hands your crying baby over during recess. Justice is what you pay for getting caught. You will not be able to measure the cost in money: You are living with the knowledge that one way or another, you are going to be less of a man when it is all done.

Justice is equal to living in the mood of an overcrowded men's room for the rest of your days. Justice will more than make you pay for the highest pleasure you felt in the highest moment of the crime. The final horror of justice is looking at your kids. Either their eyes are in misery or their mouths are numb.

And the wives, the girlfriends. How deadening are their emotions! If they are not bitter then they are kin to despair. They

THIS BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS Roma is wed to a perfect title. To the man or woman in the dock, and to their family and friends, justice is a state that is there to be endured. For justice comes down to long, dead hours of sitting around. Justice consists of waiting to speak to your lawyer, who is never with you long enough and charges more than you can afford while all the while he emanates his profound dissatisfaction with what he is being paid. Justice is the hard small ball of concentrated dread in the pit of the stomach that

know that danger is approaching—the danger that soon they will feel nothing at all. The women stare into the bleak eye of the future—no man, no money, and too many kids.

Justice is taking such a whack at your ego that the only way to restore yourself is to go out and pull another caper. Self-respect is what crime is all about. Self-respect—usually to be followed by the second act—enduring justice.

These photographs have the eloquence and resonance of the best literature on the most unhappy subjects. ■