THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 3 | 1994

The Punishment Seminar

Gary Fincke

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

The Prose Poem: An International Journal is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress) for the Providence College Digital Commons. http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/

Gary Fincke

THE PUNISHMENT SEMINAR

The father who beat his boy to death claimed his son stuck to the letter 'G' each time he attempted the alphabet. "It was like water dripping all night," he said, "my wife yammering through dinner. 'H,' I'd think. 'H. H.' But nothing unglued his brain but my ball-peen hammer."

In Kentucky, intermarriage turns, as lessons, some descendants blue. Luke Combs, for instance, who made those blue people famous by taking his defect to town. The common cold colored his face. Or drinking. The flu or whatever shifts the blood's balance and calls up that polar look from comic books.

In England, once, attempted suicide was a capital offense. Incentive to do things right. Height enough for the gymnastics of dying. Overboard, hours from shore. Pills, a year's dose, swallowed so the criminal wouldn't revive to a trial, to the gallows, the gas chamber, the pocked wall for failure.