

Summer 2012

## Ellen Harvey

## ARTIST PROJECTS / PENAL CODES

When we commissioned the artist projects for this issue, we asked the participants to consider a scene of punishment, whether real or imagined, that they have either been the subject of, participated in, or witnessed (either in actuality or in a fictional context). These scenes of punishment could range, we explained, from the minor (e.g., being given a parking ticket or being sent out of class) to the severe (e.g., torture, capital punish-ment) and might just as likely emerge from any of the wide range of institutional contexts in which punitive measures are enforced-from the arena of the family to the school, from competitive sports to larger political bodies. While the generality of the brief did in fact pro-duce projects with diverse content, we were intrigued to find a striking formal symmetry—every one of them included, in one way or another, a textual element, suggesting that perhaps scenes of punishment have within them something that exceeds the visual, requiring that we must, finally, return to language to fully access their meaning.

MAKING THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME WAS A SPECIALTY OF THE NUNS MALIKE AT MY STATE PRIMARY THE GIRLS JUST GOI HIT IN FRONT OF EVERYON IT ON THE BUM IN PRIVATE THE OFFENSE IN QUESTION. INSTITUTIONA LIZED CLICHE BUT YOU HAD TO ADMIRE SINCERE ATTEMPTS TO INVENT PUNISHMENTS THAT MIGHT ACTUALLY CAUSE THE REFLECT ON HER SIN. UNLADYLIKE RUNNING IN THE CORRIDORS RESULTED IN OFFENDER RUNNING BACK AND FORTH TO KITCHEN GARDEN UNTIL IT WA WAS UNLIKELY TO RUN