kneeling on sharpened floors

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.14.08

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.14.08
Available at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol14/iss1/8

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Bob Mulligan

**kneeling on sharpened floors**

lesson plans, if any actually existed, were aborted so, too, the discussion of Vesuvius' volcanic ash in 79 A.D. encrusting Romans like chrysalis mid-thought as the cold shill sirens of a tepid war breached the universal routine forcing the abandonment of mind-dulling patterns increasing heart rates in a soldierly dash to the cloak room for a shroud: the fabric of protection smelling of home and the love of our mother kneeling on sharpened floors we shared touching intimacy with terrazzo buffed to an exquisitely fine edge resembling the pipes of a pressure fed organ mechanically aligned in scaling rows we were tuned to the import of prayer keyed for the unlocking chant accompanied by a celestial backbeat clicking and clacking the beads of sorrowful mystery: the weapons of choice in a children's crusade against crimson, godless hordes kneeling on sharpened floors wandering on inswep t eyes this we prayed:

our Father who art in heaven hollow be thy name shall we be found here by a new millennium's progeny,
consider yourself lucky
some children don’t get there
they fail, they flail,
they fall beyond the pale
but you, my boy, you found a way
heaven’s no more than that

Bob Mulligan

**Gender Crunching: Parochial Style**

Setting and Prologue: Cathedral of St. Stephen. Good Friday, 1961. The Rosary of the Sorrowful Mysteries has just been completed. All is still except for the dust motes—residents in the liberating light of ancient stained glass windows. The entire grammar school is in attendance. As is the custom, boys are seated in front and the girls are behind them.

Concept for Act I: Daedalus is to Icarus as Japetto is to Pinocchio. Dorothy had no father. We’re not talking about mothers here.

Concept for Act II: The priest, male by virtue of his vocation or priest by virtue of his gender? In any case, he was the only (temporarily) effective constraint on any of the shrieking sisters. A crystallizing moment occurred for Judy in grade 3 upon noticing that his he-ness possessed the capacity to shut up her high-ness.

Act II, Scene 3 (dialogue excerpt): Father Gulagus: “Sister Kristina, you must end this now. Submit to my authority and remove those papers from the bulletin board.”

Concept for Act III: A nationally acclaimed feminist, former nun, prolific author, darling of the talk show circuit, and currently a featured seminar speaker, Dr. Judith Josephs, former provincial in the Order of the Hopeful Sisters, will be lecturing at the local community college, three city blocks from her former convent. Her topic: “The Channeling of Gender Roles: We Took Very Poor Care of Our Girls!” It is expected that tickets will sell out quickly.

Act III, Scene 5 (dialogue excerpt): Dr. Josephs: “In the final analysis it is a shame, and I emphasize the word “shame,” for what this structure, this church of man-made rules did in a rather conscious way to the