



THE FLORA LEVY LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES

1981

VOLUME II

March 20, 1983

Warm Regards

To

Dear Dr. Eamon M. Kelly

from

John Kennedy Toole's Mother,
Thelma Dussing Toole



The Flora Levy Lecture in the Humanities

1981

Gravity and Grace

in

the

Novel

A CONFEDERACY

OF

DUNCES

Robert Coles

The University of Southwestern Louisiana
Lafayette, Louisiana

The first one hundred copies of this edition have been numbered and signed by Mrs. Thelma Toole.

Cover Design: Reproduction of **Robert Coles**
In Search For Grace Among
the Dunces, oil portrait by
George Rodrigue

Copyright ©1983 by the University of Southwestern Louisiana
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

IN MEMORY OF
GUSSIE LEVY
(1879-1957)

A brutish man dreads not sin,
And an ignorant man cannot be saintly,
And the shamefast man cannot learn,
And the impatient man cannot teach,
And he that engages overmuch in trade cannot become wise:
And where there are no men, strive to be a man.

—Hillel

PREFACE

Dr. Robert Coles, in delivering the Flora Levy Lecture in the Humanities, has given a reading of *A Confederacy of Dunces* which, at once, removes us from the too much laughter, hilarity, and gossip evoked by the novel in its early days of publication. Behind the eccentric and comic conduct of the novel's characters, particularly that of Ignatius Reilly, there is a spiritual vision deserving of consideration.

What John Kennedy Toole has accomplished is quite remarkable. In writing a novel about New Orleans, a city haunted by the fascinating Marie Laveau, by the legendary Jean Lafitte, and the sublime Witch of Maurepas, but far away from "the iron New England dark" so often visited by the somber and reproachful ghosts of Cotton Mather or Jonathan Edwards, Toole has nevertheless discovered on the banquettes and merry streets of the city, in its narrow, shot-gun houses and its quaint shops, and even in its erotic French Quarter, those perennial issues of theology having to do with body and soul, world and mind, gravity and grace.

Appreciating the wit and irony, the wonderful rendering of the quaint New Orleans dialect, the comic grotesqueness and absurdity of character is to realize one of the most attractive elements of the novel's power. But to see beyond that outrageously delightful absurdity of Ignatius Reilly and to find within him a mind riddled with the same anguish and torment of T.S. Eliot's Tiresias is to come upon the deepest points of the satire and to apprehend the religious character of the author's mind.

The wonderful phrase, "theology and geometry," held to by Ignatius as the compressed explanation of his creed, Coles tells us, should not be taken only as an anachronistic utterance, underscoring the seemingly absurd stance which Ignatius

assumes against the world. Coles associates this phrase with a thinker and mystic of this century in whose life little of the humorous and the absurd is likely to have existed. It might well have been spoken by Simone Weil, whose personality T.S. Eliot has described as "difficult, violent, and complex," and of whom he has written that she was "one who might have become a saint." What Weil would have admired in the phrase is its underlying vision of human efforts in harmony with Divine purpose, so Coles suggests, and then proceeds to formulate it as a "message of order, hierarchy, interdependence—all under Heaven's exceedingly alert eyes."

The implied comparison which Coles makes can engender deeper considerations of the character of Ignatius and draw us closer to the serious intentions of Toole. Coles does not develop this analogy; this he wishes for the audience to do for themselves. A jarring comparison it seems, even strained and outlandish, but one which, in the startling resemblances and strong contrasts it suggests, makes us mindful of what Walker Percy would call "the tragedy of the book." If, in their perceptions and spiritual affinities, Simone Weil and Ignatius Reilly resemble each other, then how greater the difference to be found in the conduct of their lives, a difference so telling as to temper our laughter at the ovoidal Ignatius.

Distress with the world, the consequence of an unyielding idealism, led Weil into deeper paths of self-denial. Her ultimate protest at things-as-they-are was expressed in her fasting, the cause of her premature death. Yet her asceticism, growing ever so strong in her last days, had the salutary effect of creating a profound bond between herself and the world, and more than ever she sustained "a strong interest in the concrete, particular world, the day-to-day routines. . .," as Coles tells us. Ignatius, experiencing the same crisis of spirit, and suffering a similar disaffection from modern culture, handles his plight quite differently: his life, a constant

intensification of self-indulgence, is dominated by an unconquerable oral greed, and he becomes incapable of the smallest, the most ordinary of human responsibilities.

What Coles wishes his audience to understand is that *A Confederacy of Dunces* was written by an artist with a deeply religious sense of life. Doubtless, like Blanche DuBois, Toole heard the Cathedral bells of the French Quarter, and he loved the "theology and geometry" awakened by their tunes. His great apprehension was not that our social eccentricities, our leaning toward pleasure, our failure in love, our abhorrence of work would distract us from hearing the bells. Rather it was a fear that these things, taken as a whole, and perceived by us as failed efforts in the living of an honorable life, would plunge us into the despair of never again aspiring for the moral and intellectual symmetry sounded by the bells. And behind that fear Toole sensed one of the most terrifying of human desires: the wish to be free of seeking knowledge, of making distinctions, of accepting responsibility, all called for by the bells, escape from which could be attained by returning to the thanatotic din of the dunces. There, where each fixes "his eyes before his feet," we can grow indifferent to, and become ignorant of the bells. The din can teach us to accede in such a way that only a few will notice that we have ears and hear not.

Maurice duQuesnay
Chairman
Flora Levy Lecture Committee

INTRODUCTION OF ROBERT COLES, M.D.

Gene Usdin, M.D.

Dr. Coles is a native Bostonian who has roamed widely but continues to use the Boston area where he now resides as his base. After graduating from Harvard University, he matriculated at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, where he received his medical doctorate in 1954. He took graduate training in psychiatry (including child psychiatry) at Harvard Medical School and its complex. In 1958, he was called into the service and was stationed for two years at the United States Air Force Hospital in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he was chief of the neuropsychiatry service. It was here that he began his love affair with the South, and he has remained an active, ardent, but loving and proud critic. He was a frequent visitor to New Orleans while in the service. After his discharge, he lived there in 1961 and 1962, and returned often in the ensuing three years. Following this, he returned to Harvard University Medical School and now serves as professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at that institution.

Robert Coles is a humanist with deep religious feelings. His publications are many and largely directed to social issues and those less fortunate. He has written poignantly about the have-nots, the underfed, migrant farm workers, poor children, uprooted children, dead-end schools, and desegregation, among many other important issues. He has been a biographer of the famed psychoanalyst, Professor Erik Erikson, and of Louisiana's own Dr. Walker Percy. In addition to the psychiatric literature, his articles have appeared in our foremost periodicals, especially those related to social commentaries, such as *New Republic*, *Saturday Review*, *Daedalus*, and *New York Review of Books*, among others.

He has written thirty-three books. It is indeed difficult to single out any particular volume, but possibly his five-volume series, *Children of Crisis* (published 1967-78), bears special focus. For Volumes II and III of this series, he received the Pulitzer Prize.

Our speaker tonight is a social historian who has integrated psychoanalytic concepts into history and sociology. His social conscience is demonstrated by a deep concern with the discordance of our values, principles, and actions. He has caused us to reflect, usually painfully, on contemporary life and those left behind and forgotten in our dramatically changing and constantly accelerating society. He has argued for the unique importance of holding to values in spite of societal pressures dictating what's "in" at the time. He has emphasized civility, sometimes a lost virtue, even at the loss of certain beliefs, freedoms, and opportunities.

Dr. Coles' studies, which began with the plight of blacks in the South, have carried him back to the Deep South many times as well as to Appalachia, New Mexico, and Alaska. He spent this past summer as a MacArthur scholar in Northern Ireland and South Africa, and he hopes to return to these countries this coming summer.

One doesn't put down an article or book by Robert Coles without some stronger feeling of one's connectedness with all fellow human beings. One doesn't put down one of his articles or books without some apprehension and guilt feelings—and maybe we are better off for having Dr. Coles prick our social conscience, making us uncomfortable.

As you will learn, Dr. Coles is a charismatic speaker. He honors this distinguished lectureship by his participation. As a student and lover of the South, he is eminently qualified to discuss this important contribution to the literature which is set in New Orleans, a city where Dr. Coles lived and with which he is especially familiar.

Gravity and Grace in the Novel
A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES*

by
Robert Coles

Simone Weil was a brief visionary presence whose gifts to us of the twentieth century are still being sorted out and estimated with a certain surprised awe by her various critics and admirers. She combined in a life of only thirty-four years a radical social and cultural disaffection with an intense conservative yearning for certain elements of the past which she hoped to see given new life in a world whose moral contours she tried to imagine and describe in various essays—while all the while (it can be said) dying the death of someone who had a profound skepticism of what the future offered this terribly endangered planet. She ached for the poor, the humble, the hurt, the ailing, the vulnerable; she scorned what in the Bible gets called derisively “principalities and powers”—those who earned the outspoken contempt of Jeremiah and Isaiah and Amos in the Old Testament and, of course, Jesus Christ Himself in the New Testament—the smug, pompous, and self-important ones whose merciless and vain extortions are done at the expense of the rest of us.

On the other hand, she saw precisely, and early on (she was, indeed, a prophet) how mean, vicious, and dangerous some of this world’s so-called reformers are—full of pride and its consequences: the ruthless, arrogant failure to consider anyone’s point of view, unless it serves the purpose of a particular (ideological) cause. Simone Weil needed no reminder that “original sin” is far from a quaint term, entertained

**This lecture was delivered on September 18, 1981, at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana.*

gullibly and in ignorance by those who lived in earlier times. She looked relentlessly, candidly into her own mind and heart. She observed others closely. She concluded that no political or economic changes, no matter how well-intentioned, will take from us our humanity, our moments of doubt and disappointment, envy and truculence—aspects of our very condition. We are, as Lord knows our novelists and philosophers have been telling us over the generations, the many-sided creature who (through words and ideas) looks at the stars, but who rivals—arguably, outdistances—any and all so-called “animals” or “beasts” when it comes to such behavior as rage, rapacity, even wanton murderousness.

Her torment, then, resided in her intellectual, if not spiritual breadth—a stubborn, idiosyncratic, original-minded, personally devastating capacity for, even insistence upon, living marginally, and thereby embracing ambiguities and inconsistencies others shun as intolerable. Through her marvelous, hard-won spirituality (a gift to her as she became, physically, sicker and sicker) she managed to find, ironically, a strong interest in the concrete, particular world, the day-to-day routines and objects of involvement which, she knew, tell so much about us. “No ideas but in things,” William Carlos Williams has reminded twentieth-century urban Americans in his poem *Paterson*. Simone Weil knew how dangerous it can be for a Christian pilgrim to ignore one or another version of that injunction. The penalty turns out to be the Gnostic heresy, a direct challenge to a God who willingly, if not ardently, assumed “the flesh.” And gnosticism is related to other fatal splits—that, for instance, of ideologues who assume they can spend hours, days, a life-time with the seductive, self-serving pleasures of theory, while putting aside as unworthy or of lesser significance the countless pressing details of this life. I remember, for example, when Harvard’s buildings were seized in the early 1970s, I stood watching the assault with Erik

Erikson who wondered this out loud: “When they leave the building, will they help some old person trying to cross the street and in danger of being hurt? For that matter, will you and I do so—as we do our arguing or meditating or analyzing?”

As I read John Kennedy Toole’s *A Confederacy of Dunces*, I found the above train of thought gripping my mind constantly. Simone Weil gave us an unforgettable polarity: “gravity and grace.” By “gravity” she meant the ever-present “weight” of our minds, our bodies. (She was a great one for seeing the poetry of physics, of mathematics.) We are, inescapably, acted upon by the atoms and molecules, the muscles and hormones, the synapses which make up, in sum, ourselves. And, too, we are constantly acting upon one another: asking, taking, beseeching, demanding, telling truth and telling half-truths, and lying, and manipulating, and exhorting, and imploring, and loving, and demonstrating fearful possessiveness, angry petulance, sly displeasure, open resentment—as the expression I keep hearing in church puts it, “world without end.” But there are moments also of transcendence, strange moments, unexpected moments, even unearned ones—unless one will have God to be a puritan, a vigorous bourgeois. “Grace is everywhere,” Georges Bernanos has his curé saying at the end of *Diary of a Country Priest*, and surely Jesus Christ, as He walked through Galilee, and as He suffered in Judea, taught that lesson to “all sorts and conditions” of human beings—if I may again, and conservatively, call upon the “old” Book of Common Prayer I remember so fondly. As Dorothy Day used to put it, “the lame, the halt, the blind,” not to mention the skeptical, the loony, the extremely vulnerable, even the strenuously condemned and the exiled—grace becomes theirs, and not through the laws of state, and not, either, through the arbitrary, rigid classification of the church, but through an unexpected, a mysterious, an utterly providential arrival: Him.

Dunces and doubters, men and women demeaned by political and religious doctrine—grace lifted them all, gravity having been decisively defied.

In New Orleans, a novelist is determined to show us the unyielding pull of gravity. We are all dunces, of course, and that certainly includes any would-be prophet who happens to know how to spin a yarn. But what, exactly, is a "dunce," or indeed, a collection or "confederacy" of them? All of Toole's characters are dim-witted, driven, distended by their maker's insistence upon satire. They are true to the biblical moment of Mark: the Gadarene swine, repositories of the madness of a legion (and, alas, waiting in the wings, historically, have been thousands of other legions). The blind leading the blind. Or conniving or manipulating, or ruining altogether. It is Toole's contention that Freud missed not a trick about our silliness, our pretentiousness, our hell-bound lustiness, our feverish, egoistic possessiveness with respect to one another. It is Toole's contention, further, that a "walk on the wild side," as the saying goes, will give us, finally, ourselves—all of us who seem remarkably *unlike* Mr. Toole's various comically exaggerated men and women, until, of course, we stop and look closely at those warts and more we have learned to conceal from others, not to mention ourselves.

New Orleans has long been a cosmopolitan city, so it provides a natural and splendid setting for Mr. Toole's moral and spiritual purposes. He knows that no high-minded critique of mankind of any value can do without the Devil, under whatever the name, and needless to say, Freud's "death instinct" was one such name. "The Devil has slippery shoes," I often heard black people in Mississippi's Delta say as they contemplated, in the early 1960s, the workings of our nation's political life, and Mr. Toole has his particular black friend, Jones, tell us that again and again. Jones' running commentary is, actually, a strangely sane, earthy, shrewd, and knowing

one, a valuable and activist counterpart of Astor and Sulk, those two "handymen" Flannery O'Connor gave us in "The Displaced Person." Faulkner started it, I suppose, with Dilsey, the most powerfully developed, noble, and sustaining of all the characters offered us by white Southern novelists. The Compsons fall apart in *The Sound and the Fury*; Dilsey retains her dignity and offers what little she has, which turns out to be rather a lot. I detect a similar irony in *A Confederacy of Dunces*. The whites, all of them so much "better off," supposedly, than Jones, by virtue of their skin color, turn out to be collectively out of their minds, and especially incapable of sensible, pointed, and appropriate social and psychological judgments. But he is down-to-earth, clear-headed, and above all, attentive. He has, in Simone Weil's theological way of seeing things, devoted himself to seeing the gravity of his, of everyone's situation. (She obviously uses that word "gravity" in both its scientific and moral senses.) The result is a curious and winning grace, that of the observer who is not by any means as weighted down by the grave apprehensions which afflict all those other New Orleanians. The meek one is certainly not going to inherit a patch of the earth known as "the city that care forgot," but he rises above others whose burdens manage to put the South's racial crisis into the largest possible perspective: *sub specie aeternitatis*.

I began my post-psychiatric residency working life in New Orleans and also had my head examined there—psychoanalysis on Prytania Street. I was a Yankee alienist (if I may revert to that older medical designation for ironic purposes) and felt that there were certain advantages to being such at the time—the outsider who can glimpse a serious crisis (the civil rights struggle) with a bit of detachment. But I was a mere novice in that regard, I eventually learned. It was a group of black children who began to teach me that perceptual acuity with

regard to individuals or the social scene is not necessarily nourished by education or absent in those who have received *their* education on the streets, in the alley, the factory floors, or out in the fields, up the hollows, across a reservation or two. Here, for example, is a six-year-old New Orleans girl giving a not insignificant lecture to a Boston doctor not exactly trained to be humble: "The white folks say all these terrible things to us. My momma says they have bad tongues, and I should feel sorry for them. One woman tells me she hopes I die. It's not even nine o'clock in the morning, and she's there, every day, telling me I won't live much longer! I decided to get even with her. I stopped and told her I hoped she lived for another hundred years! She got all red, and she didn't say another word. The next day she was gone! The [federal] marshal I like best says I really 'got' to her. He asked me who told me to say what I did. I answered him: no one. If you're black and you go downtown, and you listen to the white people talking, a lot of things come to your mind, but you can't say them. White people say anything they want. Not us, we listen more than we talk, until we're alone!"

I considered myself privileged to be hearing those words. Soon enough, though, I was told in no uncertain terms not to be so proud of myself: "If you came from here, you wouldn't be visiting us." Then, a significant pause, followed by a canny and candid speculation: "My mother said you wouldn't be in that mob." Again, I felt touched, complimented. But this mere child, just beginning to read and write, knew to add a certain pointed explanation, qualification: "My uncle works at the Touro; he's there at night, cleaning the floors. He says the doctors live nearby, a lot of them. It's way far from here."

One of those "free associations" Freud told us to pay heed. Here was an "outsider" who knew how to put another "outsider" right in his place—as Toole's character Jones does in *A Confederacy of Dunces* with just about all the white people

he gets to meet and watch and know. And who are they? A particular city's splendid variety: the rich and the poor; the apparently comfortable and secure as against the quite desperate; the old and the young; the quite proper and the rather unseemly; the all-too-educated and the untutored, the innocent. They all are seen, rather obviously, through the unifying presence of Ignatius Reilly—a series of refractions emanating from a rather large diamond indeed. He is not quite the narrator, but his sprawling, at times unwieldy, other-worldly thoughts and actions make us wonder, in the existentialist tradition, where he came from, who he is, and whither he goes. Am I stretching things too intolerably when I think of Ignatius as a representation of the Catholic Church itself, struggling in the midst of a crooked and unjust and often enough quite crazy world, struggling through the lives of its members, clergy and laity alike, with all their cravings, conventional and irregular, with all their failings, evident and barely concealed and deeply rooted in this and that kind of past, struggling to survive, to make sense of this world, to live for some purpose larger than the "self" and its demanding requirements? The Catholic Church Mr. Toole tried to comprehend was the Church of the 1950s, the Church that still yearned, as Mr. Toole keeps putting it, for "theology and geometry." How Simone Weil, with her love for the Greek mathematicians and for the Church of plainsong and troubadours, not to mention an adamant theology, might have loved that phrase with its message of order, hierarchy, structure, interdependence—all under Heaven's exceedingly alert eyes!

But Mr. Toole knew that the clock was running out, the clock of D.H. Holmes on Canal Street, and the clock of the hundreds of Catholic churches in countless American towns and cities where a commercial ethic belonging to an agnostic, secular age rules supreme. He does not try to foist Ignatius

Reilly upon us; we are to be entertained and slyly brought up short rather than preached at or converted. There was, there is, Toole knew, a lot of foolish nonsense in the Catholic Church, among other institutions. If Christ was betrayed by one of his hand-picked followers, His earthly representatives over the centuries have shown themselves more than able to keep alive the tradition of Judas. But the Church, like Ignatius, had to keep trying, keep reaching out to the entire arc of humanity, keep hoping in various ways to become a spiritual instrument in the lives of every possible kind of person, as Ignatius for all his absurdities and tics and postures and excesses manages to be for the characters in *A Confederacy of Dunces*.

Maybe the word with regard to Ignatius' behavior is follies, as in "fools for Christ," a phrase Dorothy Day used all the time, helped by her beloved Dostoevsky who knew that the "politic, cautious, meticulous" ones, the utterly circumspect and unnervingly "rational" ones, have not ever been, by and large, the ones who live minute by minute with Christ's example in their hearts, minds, souls. Ignatius is an odd one, if not the biggest of all the "dunces." He is sexually irregular, to say the least. He is an occupational misfit. He belongs, it seems, to no community whatsoever. His life seems a messy, hapless one, a dead end. He needs, we have a right to think, treatment—lots and lots of it. Is he schizophrenic, or just plain loony? As for Jesus Christ, and all the saints who have struggled and died, one after the other, for Him and His Cause, they too have made us who are blessed (are we really?) with today's wisdom, wonder about our "mental health," our "problems," our peculiar if not absolutely scandalous acts, our expressed ideas, hopes, beliefs, values (what these days one gets used to calling "behavior" or "attitude").

Needless to say, Ignatius is sprung, but where is he headed? Does grace appear, of all ironies, in the person of Myra? Is the Holy Roman Catholic Church rescued from some of its

corruptions, blind-spots, hopeless impasses, and contradictions by the avowed enemy, secular humanism (to use a contemporary phrase!) militantly espoused? Or is Mr. Toole making a less decisive judgment, simply telling us that the Church of the 1960s had, quite clearly, lurched in the direction of the Myras of this world with the outcome of such a development (the Vatican of John XXIII and early Paul VI) uncertain at best? The author, remember, is a dialectician in the Augustinian tradition, able to envision the Devil as a prodding if not provocative ally. A second novel, sadly denied us, might have given us Ignatius (or an equivalent) in Manhattan on Myra's home territory, where, believe me, the reservoir of madness, banality, and stupidity, sometimes called by the designations of "high culture," or "progress," or "contemporary living" or "modernity," is no less wide and deep than that of the New Orleans given us by the talented, short-lived, wonderfully astute John Kennedy Toole.

A MOTHER'S REMEMBRANCE*

I Walk in the World for My Son

The beautiful babe, John Kennedy Toole, was born December 7, 1937, in Touro Infirmary in New Orleans. He was a rarity in the category of new-borns, because he had the alertness of a six-month-old infant, and an aura of distinction which I didn't label as genius, but the years proved so. Dark, luminous eyes, a pale ivory skin, and the composite features he bore all his life. Nurses would come into my room, giggling and telling me he was the only baby with facial expression whom they had ever seen. They were vastly amused by the fact that when he cried, everybody cried, truly presaging leadership, which he embodied throughout his life. It was clear the night that he was born that he was ready to get going and achieve.

Private nursery school at three, public school kindergarten at four, and first grade at five. After a month in first grade, he cried and said he wasn't learning anything. I made an appointment with Orleans Parish School Board psychologist Miss Claire Charlaron, and his I.Q. was 133: the genius level is 160. She said his rating would have been higher, but he wouldn't talk to her. I responded, "He was too busy studying you, and couldn't be disturbed." That was the secret of his keen insight into people: a constant awareness. The seeing eye and the hearing ear characterized him all his life.

At McDonough 14 school, he skipped two grades, and entered departmental at nine. Grammar school was completed at twelve, and, in that year, he entered Alcee Fortier High.

**Mrs. Thelma Toole, mother of the late John Kennedy Toole, was asked by the Levy Committee to write a short memoir of her son. The committee thought this an appropriate request since the lecture itself was held in commemoration of Toole.*

From second grade, he referred to his classmates as "those children."

At sixteen, Tulane University became a challenge, and for the first time, he began to study. He was awarded a merit scholarship, and strove for Honors in English. Upon graduation, he received a Phi Beta Kappa Key, a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to Columbia University, and Honors in English. He was the only student attaining Honors in English in a huge graduating class.

Teaching posts included Hunter College in New York City, the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, and St. Mary's Dominican College in New Orleans.

He served two years in the U.S. Army at Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico. His exceptional abilities were immediately recognized, and he was made leader of the English Team, consisting of eighteen college graduates. A private room was assigned to him. The privacy of the room activated him, and in '62 and '63, he began to write "Confederacy." A letter to me contained this: "Mother, this is the first time I am relieved of correcting papers and intensive research, so I am beginning to write a novel about New Orleans. This surfacing has been repressed for a long time, and now I am happily engaged." In two years, it was completed. A Pulitzer Prize winner was starting to blossom. The Medal of Military Merit was awarded to him.

While in Puerto Rico, he submitted the manuscript to Simon and Schuster Publishers. At first, the editors warmly received it but, as time passed, they began scathing criticism and demanded "rewrite, rewrite, etc." My son withheld this correspondence from me, because he didn't want to worry me! How appalling that I didn't share his suffering! By the way, Simon and Schuster has never had a Pulitzer Prize winner!

The Ducoing side produced four teachers: my aunt, Emma Ducoing, and my sister, Anna Ducoing Hingle, were

elementary teachers, I was at high school level, and my son at college level. He taught with scholarly strength, drive, and dedication. Sister Mary Louise of St. Mary's Dominican College said that he was the only instructor with whom she had no complaint. His beautifully resonant theatrical voice and forceful delivery made him a wonderfully engaging speaker.

As a boy, he was an actor, singer, artist—and very efficient in departmental manual training. I gave him freely and happily of my extensive cultural training. I was his mentor during his formative years, and he became my mentor when he entered Tulane University.

At nine years, he showed great ability as a mimic, and would entertain me with impersonations of his teachers, not in a disrespectful mood, but with his keen observations of speech, mannerisms, and gestures. What kindred spirits we were! He looked at people with the observant, amused eyes of the philosopher.

He left New Orleans, January 20, 1968, saying he was going to visit a fellow teacher in Lafayette. Two months and six days later, his body was found in Biloxi, Mississippi, asphyxiated in his car. Inexpressible tragedy! An overwhelming loss to the scholarly and literary world, and a despairing loss to his parents!

In his personal effects was a memento of his trip to the Flannery O'Connor farm at Andalusia, outside of Milledgeville, Georgia. The dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy degree was to be "Flannery O'Connor's Life and Writings." He carried a profound admiration for her in his heart.

My darling's Mt. Parnassus brain and multiplicity of talents forced him to endure many obstacles and trials. But, he lives

on, and the wonder of him still lingers in the world, and will continue to live!

From the one who was the vessel which brought him to life, his mother,

Thelma Ducoing Toole

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In editing this lecture, I incurred a number of debts of gratitude, particularly to Mr. John Ferstel, who, besides assisting me in the preparation of this text, made many other valuable contributions to the success of the printing. Also I am indebted to Mr. George Bradley and Dr. Carol MacCurdy, of the English Department of the University of Southwestern Louisiana, for assisting me in the final proofreading of the text. Special thanks go to Dr. Albert Fields, Chairman of the English Department, for his steadfast support in this project.

Maurice duQuesnay

This booklet was designed in cooperation with Gerald Tribe of the University of Southwestern Louisiana Printing Services. It was phototypeset in Palatino. The cover was photographed by Frank Lotz Miller and photoengraved and printed by Savoy-Dixie Press, Lafayette, Louisiana. The entire edition was printed on Beckett-Cambrić's brilliant white Classic Laid text.

Courtesy of Prof. Crawford

