

HUMOR



John Kennedy Toole

(1937-1969)

from *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980)

“My life is a rather grim one. One day I shall perhaps describe it to you in great detail....

I dust a bit...in addition I am at this moment writing a lengthy indictment against our century. When my brain begins to reel from my literary labors, I make an occasional cheese dip....

‘Well, what do you expect? The human body, when confined, produces certain odors which we tend to forget in this age of deodorants and other perversions. Actually, I find the atmosphere of this room rather comforting. Schiller needed the scent of apples rotting in his desk in order to write. I, too, have my needs. You may remember that Mark Twain preferred to lie supinely in bed while composing those rather dated and boring efforts which contemporary scholars try to prove meaningful. Veneration of Mark Twain is one of the roots of our current intellectual stalemate’....

A firm rule must be imposed upon our nation before it destroys itself. The United States needs some theology and geometry, some taste and decency. I suspect that we are teetering on the edge of the abyss....

‘Employers sense in me a denial of their values.’ He rolled over on his back. ‘They fear me. I suspect that they can see that I am forced to function in a century I loathe. This is true even when I worked for the New Orleans Public Library’....

Leaving New Orleans also frightened me considerably. Outside of the city limits the heart of darkness, the true wasteland begins....

The day before me is fraught with God knows what horrors....

‘Stop!’ I cried imploringly to my god-like mind....

