

**A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES**, the singular and memorable satirical novel which has earned for its late author, John Kennedy Toole, the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction this year, is "must" reading. Published by Louisiana State University Press, the entire story is set in New Orleans. It is nostalgic, brilliantly humorous, penetratingly colorful in depiction, and the characters are so real that they leap forth from the pages in which they are depicted in three dimensional meticulous splendor. Toole's anti-hero, Ignatius Reilly, an intellectual nonconformist who does not belong on this planet, is a marvelous character who lives in his own dream world, is incomparably funny without ever trying to be so, and fantasizes about the world as he would create it in semi-autobiographical ramblings captured on the pages of dozens of Big Chief tablets strewn about his room in the same disarray in which his life functions. Ignatius is larger than life in the way Shakespeare's Falstaff is. And populating Ignatius's unpredictable world are a bevy of wonderful jovial characters. There is Irene Reilly, Ignatius's long suffering mother, warm and exasperated, made all the more loveable with her uncerebral dialogue written in New Orleans dialect. There is Santa Battaglia, Irene's best friend, with equally delicious ninth ward dialect adding dimension to her bubbling personality. There is Angelo Mancuso, Santa's bungling policeman nephew, who assumes manifold disguises in order to trap crooks whom he almost never finds. There is Myrna Minkoff, Ignatius's New York Jewish girl friend, a sensational blend of Barbara Stréissand and activist Jane Fonda, who lives to create and to defend lost causes. There is Lana Lee, the tough as nails owner of a questionable, sleezy bar on Bourbon Street. And there is Darlene, the curvacious blonde b-drinker/dancer who works for Lee. There is priceless Burma Jones, the wise black man who works at the bar and whose philosophy of life is unique and jovial in the way that Eliza Dolittle's father's philosophy is in "My Fair Lady." There is Miss Trixie, a wacky golden ager who is tremendously like Agnes Gooch. And there is Claude Robichaux, whose mentality couples all that he dislikes as stemming from Communistic influence. Oh, there is so much more: Mr. Gongalez of Levy's Pants, and Gus Levy who owns Levy's Pants, and his abrasive wife. There is Dorian Greene, a vibrantly colorful "gay", and half a dozen more unforgettable types. The familiar hot dog stand that dots the French Quarter, the Prytania Theatre, the clock under D.H. Holmes Department Store, and Constantinople Street are some of the New Orleans landmarks immortalized in this treasure of a book. And Toole's greatest feat of immortalization is the character of Ignatius: fool and intellect, W.C. Fields and Falstaff humpty-dumpty, filled with invective and superb comic wit; there has never been another such character in fiction. Ignatius Reilly takes his place in posterity with Macbeth, Oedipus and Don Quixote. The great tragedy of the book is that its sensitively unique and brilliant author committed suicide over a decade ago when he could not find a publisher. But there is a happy side: suppose John Toole's equally unique and brilliant mother, Thelma, had not persevered and had not herself found a publisher twelve years after her only son's death. Thank the angels for L.S.U. Press and their decision to publish "A Confederacy of Dunces."