

Toole, John Kennedy. *A Confederacy of Dunces*.

Louisiana State Univ. Pr. May 1980. 338p. fwd. by Walker Percy. ISBN 0-8071-0657-7. \$12.95. P
The improbable hero of this monstrous, touching, and funny first novel is one 30-year-old Ignatius Reilly, hugely obese, virginal, afflicted with a malfunctioning pyloric valve, and the holder of a master's degree in medieval studies. Having spent eight years in college "on his poor Grammam Reilly's insurance money," he's done nothing further but lie around the house he shares with his doting mother, berating TV shows and movies and making endless, desultory notes for a trenchant critique of contemporary culture. The novel chronicles his disdainful stabs at holding down a job (from files clerk at Levy Pants to hot dog vendor in the French Quarter) with ebullient inventiveness. To be sure, there are flaws: a sequence of static scenes rather than true plot or character development, occasional stereotyping, a contrived ending. Some annoyed readers will term the whole an exercise in narcissistic indulgence. Others will be seduced by the book's hilarious mixture of unabashed reality distortion and uncannily accurate rendering of the speech and sights of New Orleans. And, underneath the grotesqueries, one senses a generous and humble acceptance of human foolishness and imperfection.--
Anneliese Schwarzer, "Library Journal"