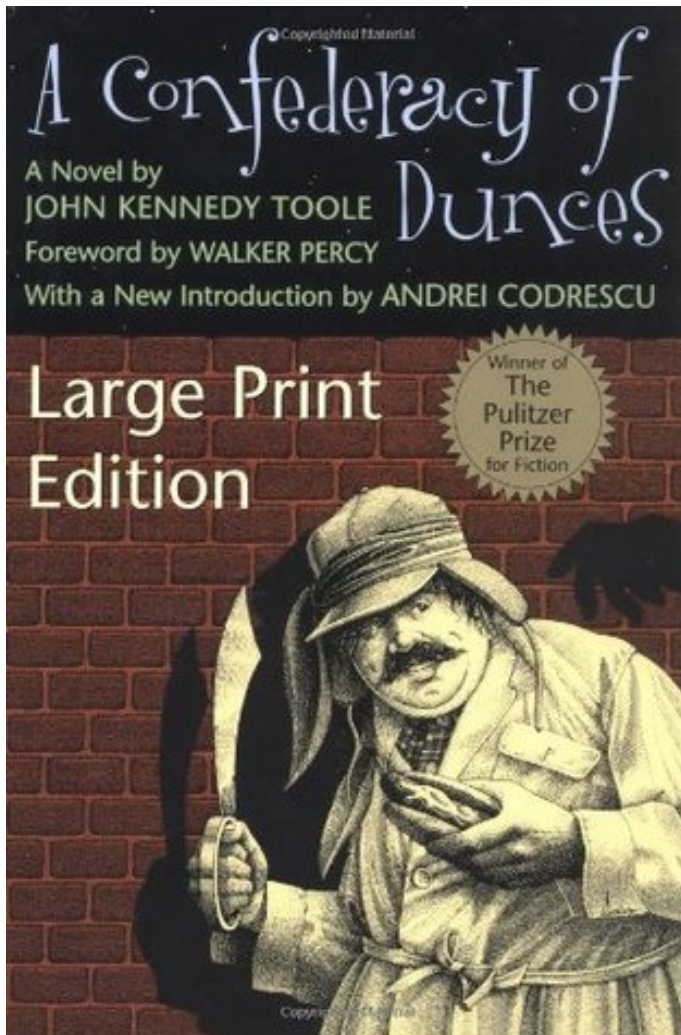

John Kennedy Toole

A Confederacy of Dunces



Title: A Confederacy of Dunces

Author: John Kennedy Toole

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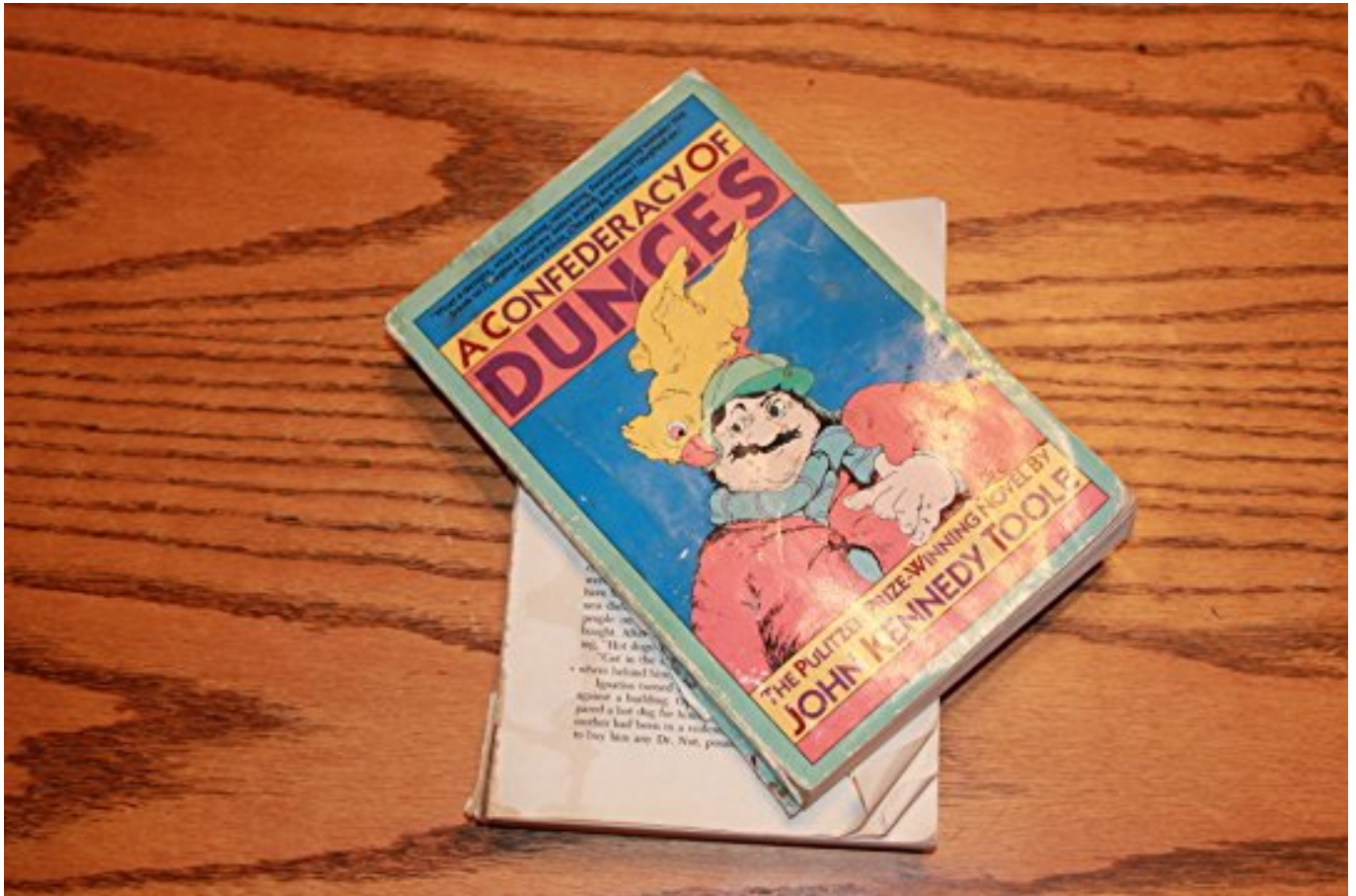
Description

Released by Louisiana State University Press in 1980, *A Confederacy of Dunces* is nothing short of a publishing phenomenon. Rejected by countless publishers and submitted by the author's mother years after his suicide, the book won the 1981 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Today there are almost two million copies in print worldwide in eighteen languages. Now, for the first time, John Kennedy Toole's comic masterpiece is available in a large print edition. Toole's lunatic and sage novel introduces one of the most memorable characters in American literature, Ignatius Reilly, whom Walker Percy dubs "slob extraordinaire, a mad Oliver Hardy, a fat Don Quixote, a perverse Thomas Aquinas rolled into one." Set in New Orleans, *A Confederacy of Dunces* outswifts Swift, one of whose essays gives the book its title. As its characters burst into life, they leave the region and literature forever changed by their presence -- Ignatius and his mother; Miss Trixie, the octogenarian assistant accountant at Levi Pants; inept, wan Patrolman Mancuso; Darlene, the Bourbon Street stripper with a penchant for poultry; Jones the jivecat in spaceage dark glasses.

Included here is the introduction that writer and New Orleans resident Andrei Codrescu composed for the book's twentieth anniversary. Set in oversized type for ease in reading, the large print edition will gratify both first-timers seeking to discover this modern-day classic and longtime aficionados wishing to reread a favorite novel.

Insightful reviews

RandomAnthony: How much do I love *A Confederacy of Dunces*? This much.



I've read the novel at least ten times and this edition (which a friend rightfully noted displays an ugly ass cover) became my glove compartment book through a few years of waiting-in-the-carpool-lane-after-school stretches. I re-read the novel late this past May and it still holds up. Genius structure, brilliant dialogue, dark as hell, and funny over and over. Mr. Toole, I don't know what demons haunted you, but when you exhaled this novel you mainlined literary exuberance. Thank you. *A Confederacy of Dunces* keeps my faith in books in ways that few other novels can.

Madeleine: **ETA:** *I recently came across a physical copy of this at my favorite used-book store. The eagerness with which I grabbed said copy--and the disappointment I felt in its previous owner for the lack of annotation I found in its pages--suggests that I liked this book far more than I hated its main character. Also, I am gleefully drunk at this particular moment so please forgive me for any logical or grammatical inconsistencies currently present in this preface. I might get around to fixing them once sobriety returns to me.*

I've come to realize that, for me, a mere "liked it" is usually the most apologetic rating. A three-star rating is my literary equivalent of "It's not you, it's me," an embarrassed concession that I'm the real problem here. It's usually an unspoken understanding that I can recognize why a work is so universally lauded but that it just didn't tickle me the way it ought to have. Sometimes it's simply a matter of taste, sometimes it's just bad timing, sometimes it's me having a visceral

reaction to a work of fiction that shouldn't get under my skin so deeply. My three stars do not do this book justice, I realize that: They do, however, reflect just how torturous it was for me to watch Ignatius Reilly not get the thorough comeuppance or righteous bitch-slap that both hands of Fortuna owed such a thundering manchild.

So I always thought this was written by a contemporary of Jonathan Swift's. Why? Maybe it's because of the title. Maybe it's because Toole is the first person since Swift who could make satire purr like a satisfied lap cat. Maybe it's because this is a novel packed with odious vermin of the highest order. Whatever the cause for my wildly mistaken notion, I don't remember what set me straight, nor do I recall why gaining such corrective insight propelled me on a frantic mission to both own and read this book as soon as humanly possible: All I am certain of is that the urge to get my hands on "Confederacy of Dunces" was impossible to put off 'til later, which is my preferred approach to doing almost anything. But every paper-and-ink copy I found had a cover that I absolutely hated (and now that I know the character, I'm annoyed that Ignatius looks more like a happy-go-lucky buffoon on many of the cover images when he is, in fact, a detestable, pretentious little wanker who masks his inability to relate to other people with an abrasive, overeducated front). The solution? Downloading this on my trusty but much-neglected Kindle.

It's not that I don't love my Kindle (because I do, to an almost psychotic extent). Nor does my bookworm snobbery extend to the assumption that digital books are automatically inferior to their traditional predecessors. It's just that, after my e-reader became less of a reading device and more of an avenue for proving my Scrabble dominance over that dick AI *even though* I almost always wind up with more vowels than I think the game really includes, I simply grew accustomed to not using Ruggles the Kindle for his intended nose-in-a-book purpose (no, I haven't given all of my gadgets Pynchonian monikers; yes, I do see the irony in naming my e-reader after an author who was famously reluctant for his works to be digitalized).

But this isn't about my Kindle: This is more about the shiny new iPhone I acquired recently, the very device that signaled another blow to my pseudo-Luddite ways by thrusting me into the joyous world of being owned by a smartphone (... I'm actually not sure if that was sarcasm, either). Because the first thing I did after shelling out money on yet another Apple product, aside from blowing more than half of my monthly data allotment on downloading selections from my iTunes library before even leaving the Verizon store, was put the Kindle app on my as-of-yet unnamed phone.

Seeing as I am, however reluctantly, part of the generation that feels unsettlingly naked without one's phone, my phone goes almost everywhere with me -- and now, so does my Kindle's vast treasury of reading material. Suddenly, the hatred I felt (and still feel) for one Ignatius Jacques Reilly grew in all directions, as if it, too, were glutting itself on Paradise Hot Dogs. I hated Ignatius at work. I hated him at home. I hated him in the bathroom. I hated him in bed, on the couch, in other people's cars, while waiting at everything from the grocery store to the dentist's office to the gas station, I hated him in a variety of locations to rival Dr. Seuss's rhyming lists. My burning dislike of the book's main character slipped its tentacles of ire around nearly every facet of my life to the point where I was transferring my irritation to probably undeserving but still irksome strangers.

Reader, I *hated* him.

And it felt bloody freeing, even if I'll never get the closure of punching Ignatius right in his stupid, Vaseline'd mustache. I'm the kind of person who feels uncomfortable when characters in books or movies are staunchly positioned under a storm cloud of shitty luck and proceed to have misfortune rained upon them to an allegedly humorous effect: Being in a position to shamelessly enjoy every irate former employer's final tongue lashing, to celebrate everyone who peeved Ignatius the way he annoyed the hell out of me (Dorian Greene, I think I might actually love you), to snicker at every unflattering description of a character who I loathed made me feel less awful about finally reveling in the seemingly downward trajectory of a character whose downfall I *wished* I could have on my otherwise itchy conscience. It was such a nice change to embrace the inevitable onslaught of woe that came rushing at a story's main character for once.

But Ignatius even ruined that for me, as his titanic girth is buoyed by an ego that just won't quit. What willful refusal to accept responsibility! What blissful ignorance of one's own flaws! What enthusiastic defiance of reality! The mental gymnastics required in tirelessly painting oneself as the eternal victim would have impressed me if the character executing such skillful lack of accepting blame for his lot in life weren't such an overgrown brat.

Though it's not like many of the other characters had a whole lot more going for them other than reluctant sympathy and the old adage that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The duplicitous shrew Lana Lee probably should have been the most detestable member of the cast: While Ignatius is simply too emotionally immature to exist in harmony with the real world, Lana is straight-up starved of all redeeming qualities. As hard as I tried to sympathize with Irene, Ignatius's poor, long-suffering mother, she was clearly all talk and no action well before the book began, as Ignatius exhibits a lifetime of experience manhandling her into emotional submission -- let this book be a cautionary tale for the long-term damage of passive parenting! As for Mrs. Levy? She must have inflicted me with some kind of temporary Tourette's syndrome because I was helpless to squelch the string of profanities that wrenched themselves from my mouth every time she opened hers.

On the other hand, there were some redeeming *dramatis personae* to be found amidst Toole's merry band of walking character flaws. If Dorian's brief appearance was a breath of fresh air, Jones's presence was the life raft I clung to in a maelstrom of assholery. I might have actually cheered at the end when Officer Mancuso got the kudos he deserved after four-hundred-some pages of being shat on. I was pretty keen on Mr. Levy until Ignatius dug his teabag-scented claws into him. And, okay, fine: There were actually a lot of folks who I liked simply because they didn't annoy me, like Darlene and Mr. Clyde. Actually, Darlene's cockatoo might have been one of the most likable characters in the book by virtue of his role in kicking off the climax.

And then there's Myrna, who just might be the most effective foil ever. We hate in others what we hate most about ourselves, and Ignatius love-hates her because they're too much alike in all the wrong ways. Their letters are strokes of narrative brilliance, offering a richly suggested history between the two: I got such a kick out of how Myrna is the only character who gets even

a kernel of truth from Ignatius and she assumes that he's exaggerating with every stroke of his pen. I probably would have liked her less had she been more of an active force here, so I'll be happy with how stingy Toole was with her scenes.

This should, by all rights, be at least a four-star novel. It's Toole's fault that he was too adept at creating characters that embody so much of what disgusts me in real people.

Paul Bryant: Authors who commit suicide find their Lovelybones-eye view from the afterlife brings them no comfort:

David Foster Wallace : Oh my God - look at that dreadful biography of me... and it's selling too... it's like they're murdering me all over again ... oh if I could only commit suicide all over again - but up here, you can't!

John Kennedy Toole : Oh shut up you preening self-regarding self-annotating depressing pedant, what about ME?? My God, if I'd only persevered for another year or so, I'd have been rich! Famous! Women would have wanted to sleep with me... maybe! Look at those sales figures! I'm so miserable! If there was only a way to commit suicide again up here again... but there isn't....

B S Johnson : Put a sock in it - your situation is, admittedly, redolent of a sublime irony, but the afterlife of a real artist - me - not you, me - a real avant-gardist, a true believer - is wretched - look - hardly any of my God damned books are in print any more. No one loves them, just the odd post-grad creep scribbling a note in the margins of something unreadable. If there was only a way to commit suicide again up here again... but there isn't....

Sylvia Plath : Bloody men! Up here! Again! No escape! And look! They're giving Ted Hughes a plaque in Westminster Abbey! Fuck!

Brandon the Gentleman: After listening to dozens of serious issues approximately 'A Confederacy of Dunces,' I figured I needed to learn it. And upon my 3rd test at analyzing it, I did end it. and that i discovered that i didn't love it at all. There are a handful of funny pages, yet you'll want to undergo via 70 pages of tripe in line with one web page of decency. do not allow the Pulitzer idiot you. the single cause this novel was once released was once as the writer killed himself simply because he could not post it, after which his mom again and again despatched it to a similar writer again and again till he broke and eventually positioned it in print. it is a mercy publishing.

Nathan: i do know i am out alone in this one, yet I loathe this book. i actually imagine it glorifies whining to an quantity by no means ahead of obvious within the human condition. each person i do know loves this book, and that i comprehend i'm in a minority here. yet Christ... That this publication is so well liked by humans in my age bracket and never so well liked by humans older or more youthful quite makes me ponder whether it really is a part of the matter or a mirrored image of the boring, whiny apathy of my generation. but when this booklet has any

redeemable facets at all, it's that it highlights simply how lazy and valueless my iteration is. it really is mirrored within the reverence humans my age supply this book, a booklet whose valuable lesson appears "whining is funny, and doing issues is bad". For dark, fabulous irony approximately inactivity and the paradoxes of a corrupt society, learn Catch-22 or a few of the extra comical writers of astrophysics tomes. Confederacy of Dunces is the Forrest Gump of literature and i would prefer to by no means have one other dialog approximately this booklet so long as I live.NC

Mary Catherine: I hated this book. I virtually gave up after the 1st 20 pages, yet i made a decision to stay with it and provides it a chance. Wrong. My first intuition was once correct!The basically factor that would have kept this for me used to be if the most personality Ignatius confronted a long, slow, painful death. there has been completely not anything approximately him that i discovered redeeming or appealing. Has there ever been a extra annoying, obnoxious personality in literature? If so, i do not are looking to know. I had heard that this used to be purported to be an hilarious book; i don't believe I laughed once. i am left to wonder whether this e-book may have this a lot hype if it wasn't for the tale of its author. (He killed himself; his mother came upon this manuscript and acquired an individual to put up it. Then it received the Pulitzer.) Truly, within the phrases of the nice Dorothy Parker, this isn't a booklet to be tossed apart lightly. it's going to be thrown with nice force.

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