

A Confederacy of Dunces
A Thematic and Technical View

نظرة تقنية وموضوعاتية لرواية تحالف البلهاء

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أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي
غُرُورٍ

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ بَلْ لَجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

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This thesis "*A Confederacy of Dunces* A Thematic and A
Technical View was discussed and certified in December, 2015.

Examination Committee

Signature

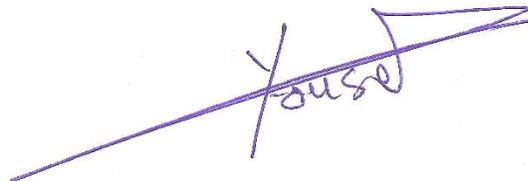
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Dedication

To the greatest mother who keeps on supporting me emotionally and spiritually and helped me to read the first of my letters when I was a child.

To my father's soul who has not able to see me in this day because of war.

To my lovely great country, IRAQ, and to every drop of blood of all Iraq
Innocent Martyrs

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***A Confederacy of Dunces* : A Thematic and Technical View**

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Abstract

The present study deals with the artistic and thematic aspects of John Kennedy Toole *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980). As suggested by the title, the novel seeks to present many social and moral issues pertaining to the problematic relation between the individual and the community. In addition this study concentrates on the social satire and criticism of people's behavior when their environments are violated.

The study comprises five chapters .The first one is an introduction which begins with an overview of *A Confederacy of Dunces* as a book and the reasons and the difficulties that prevented its publication in the second half of 20th century. The second chapter is a review of literature that presents different studies, opinions and approaches that discuss the theoretical and empirical sides of this novel. Chapter Three shows the procedures and methods used by the researcher to present his study. Chapter Four is the core of the study in that it gives detailed analysis thematically and technically. Chapter Five is the conclusion, where the main points of study are recaptured and emphasized.

Keyword: Thematic and Technical View, thematic aspects of John Kennedy Toole

نظرة تقنية وموضوعاتية لرواية تحالف البلهاء

إعداد

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إشراف

الأستاذ الدكتور يوسف توفيق

الملخص

تتعلق هذه الدراسة بالجوانب الموضوعية والتقنية لرواية جون كندي تولى (تحالف البلهاء) التي نشرت عام 1980 , وكما هو واضح في العنوان فان الرواية تتطرق الى الكثير من المواضيع الاجتماعية والأخلاقية التي تتعلق بالعلاقة الاشكالية بين المواطن ومجتمعه وتركز على النقد الاجتماعي والإنساني عندما تتعرض بيئة الانسان لتجاوز بيئة جديدة .

تتكون الدراسة من خمسة فصول . الفصل الاول عبارة عن مقدمة تشتمل على نظرة عامة على الرواية ككل والأسباب والصعوبات التي حالت دون نشرها في النصف الثاني من القرن الماضي . اما الفصل الثاني فانه يشمل الدراسات النظرية والتطبيقية التي عالجت الرواية من دراسات وأراء ونظريات , و الفصل الثالث يحتوي على الاجراءات والطرق التي استخدمت من قبل الباحث لطرح دراسته , و الفصل الرابع يحتوي على الهدف الرئيسي من اجراء الدراسة ذلك حيث يعطي التحليل المفصل للرواية موضوعيا وتقنيا , اما الفصل الخامس فأنه يشتمل على الاستنتاجات والنقاط الرئيسية التي تم التوصل اليها وایضاح الهدف من هذه الدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرة تقنية وموضوعاتية، رواية جون كندي تولى، تحالف البلهاء

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces an overview on the manuscript of John Kennedy Toole *A Confederacy of Dunces*. It shows the book and difficulties of its publication, the novel between naturalism and the picaresque tradition, the writer's skill in employing the mechanisms of self-defense and finally it sheds light on the biography of the writer.

1.1 *A Confederacy of Dunces*: The Book and Difficulties of its Publication

The story of *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a good example of how a successful work has been misjudged by its own writer as well as publishers. It is full of great humor and satire of certain dark sides of the social and human experiences: "It has been seen on the surface as a humorous story, constructed by contrast, underneath which there is a far less tangible seriousness" (Bjertner, 1)

Ever since its posthumous publication in 1980, *A Confederacy of Dunces* has attracted the attention of a large critical controversy and has oscillated between a great admiration and condemnation, and this is due to the

valuable technique and the boldness of its writer in his treatment of the merits and demerits of New Orleans society in particular and the influences of modernism on human behavior in general.

John Kennedy Toole's novel sought to make the indigenous population aware of their deep and old traditions, a point that will be explored in detail in the following pages. The book has sold more than a million and half copies, has been published in eighteen languages and is still attractive to all types of readers

Many critics consider the book as the best novel ever written to describe New Orleans, and a large part of its magic lies in the way by which Toole has represented that city and its uncommon people . He was irrevocably tied to his country as Faulkner was to Oxford, Mississippi. Toole has an impression of the English Department Colleagues whom he had met with including Bobby Byrne, the eccentric New Orleanian, with whom Toole studied English and got the inspiration for Ignatius J. Reilly, the main character, the hero and the Picaro in *A Confederacy of Dunces* (Nevils & Hardy .42) In spite of all that, some critics rejected the novel during Toole's life and after his death had good opinion such as Walker Percy who has the first

copy of novel from Tool's mother "Thelma" after his death. When Percy read it, he had the following to say:

First with sinking feeling that the novel was not bad enough to quit , then with a prickle of interest, then a growing excitement and finally an incredulity, the reader resists the temptation to say what the first made him gape, laugh out , laud grin shake his head in wonderment . It tells to reader to make the discovery of his own ,by no means a lesser virtue of Toole's novel

in his rendering of particularities of New Orleans , its back street, its out – of – the way neighborhood, it's odd speech, it's ethnic whites and one black in whom Toole has achieved the near impossible, a super comic characters of immense wit and resource fullness

(Percy1980 p.3)

Among others who were engaged with Toole's novel was Elif Shafak (Turkish researcher) who has shared Walker Percy's ideas on the technical and artistic style used by Toole. Her comment is striking

Confederacy of Dunces is a story of loneliness and comedy that hurts; at the center is an anti – hero named Ignatius J. Reilly. If Don Quixote had been thrust in to the underbelly of modern New Orleans, this is exactly who he would have become Hypochondriac, melancholic, walking catastrophe, and an unlikely philosopher in a world where few have patience for abstractions. With his clumsy way, tweed trousers and inexcusable bluntness, he does not fit in, entering social contexts with his lumbering , elephantine fashion , the reader cannot love him all the same as Walker Percy said "he is in violent revolt against the entire modern age. (Shafak, 2012 p.6)

The talent of John Kennedy Toole obviously stirred the response of the both the readers and the critics. A *Confederacy of Dunces* prevents the reader from laughing aloud; it has special charms to be exerted. The book was published with a foreword by the novelist (Walker Percy) who almost refused to read it at first time and now he compares it bravely to Cervantes's Don Quixote.

Another example was the journalist Giancarlo Ditrapano who wrote

Between the sheets with Ignatius J. Reilly, one scene, near the beginning of the book, had an especial dizzying effect on me. (I've read it hundreds and hundreds of times). When I found Ignatius a little "self-love" in his bed, an innocence even saintly, he had accessories nearby, a rubber glove, a piece of fabric form, a silk umbrella and a jar of Noxzema. (Ignatius manipulated and concentrated; At last a vision appeared, the familiar figure of large devoted colic that had been his pit in a high school [...]) Ignatius's eye dilated, crossed and closed, and he lay back among his four pillows, hoping that he had some Kleenex in his room). This is a page where I went fag. The solitude and isolation the very sadness of it all. (Ditrapano 2012).

We see that there were other critics who did not like the novel and did not see it as a valuable literary work such as Robert Gottlieb. When "Thelma", Toole's mother, bearing the copy and showing it to many publishers, nine in all, she knew that Toole made remarkable headway in gaining the attention of Simon & Schuster, editor Robert Gottlieb.

Over the course of their correspondence, Gottlieb's praise for the young novelist remained strong. Gottlieb believed that Toole was widely funny, often, funnier than almost anyone else around, and our kind of funny, but they also felt that the novel lacked significant meaning. In June 1964, Gottlieb wrote to Toole: there must be a point to everything you have in the book, a real point, not just amusingness' forced to figure itself out (Maclauchlin 2012)

If one leaves aside those judgments and views, there are those who see the book as over-emphasizing the ugly and dark side of human experience in the American society. But the wonderful thing was what happened after the book's publication which **found its way into**

cinema as a remarkable film. Indeed, Hollywood the producers and directors had been trying to turn John Kennedy Toole's Pulitzer prize – winning novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* into a successful and popular movie .

1.2 The novel between Naturalism and Picaresque Tradition:

Toole's novel share the naturalist tradition in its emphasis on determinism, violence and taboo, lust, greed and the desire for dominance or pleasure. While the protagonist was always against himself or against the nature of others, he struggled to retain a veneer of civilization. (Campbell 2015) .

Using the picaresque tradition, Toole adds the fun to the melancholy of naturalism ; He uses his novel to follow the picaresque tradition of Miguel de Cervantes "Don Quixote" the person who dreamt to be a knight by stirring everything surrounding him.

The major studies of the picaresque novel of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, are characterized by a series of attempts to achieve greater mythological rigor and to offer some original concepts with regard to the problem of a generic definition, in order to elaborate the struggle between the main character "the hero" and his struggle with society. There are two major trends; the first one is the tendency to choose a single criterion of the basis for identifying the picaresque novel. Often this standard is sociological in orientation and it depends on the figure of the "Picaro" the homeless wandering individual. Also the picaresque novel reflects the economic struggle of the oppressed social classes. (Mariorino 1996 page 46). This type of fiction which originated in Spain and found its way into other literature such as the English one especially in Fielding and Smollett.

The study of picaresque literature underscores the meaning of the word (picaeo), which identifies the literary (Rogue) as a character without dignity without a stable job and dedicated to humble activities that barely allowed him the satisfaction of his basic need. The rogue is a socially marginalized and uprooted character who is conditioned by his own genealogy to which he refers in a shameless manner in his autobiographical narrative.(Germen Benito 1994)

This is how Toole has referred to his hero when he described Ignatius on the first page of his novel

A green hunting cap squeezed the top of the fleshy balloon of a head , the green earflaps , full of large ears and uncut hair and the fine brittles that grew in the ears themselves, stuck out on either side like turn signals indicating two direction at one, full, pursed lips protruded beneath the bushy black moustache, at their corners sank into little folds filled with disapproval and potato ship crumbs " a person like that has absolutely been alienated from responders but he has all comic satire quality at the same time . (Toole, p.1)

Ignatius "The Picaro" was a poor young man jobless and almost homeless, his struggle was with the materialistic world of New Orleans. The American dream which was thought to be the age of the pleasure and parties, proved to be pointless and muzzy. Ignatius stood just like his author against all superstitions and persuasions as Nazism, Communism and even Democracy. Probably, that was one reason behind **prevention** *A Confederacy of Dunces* from publication.

" Satire is a sort of glass where the **beholder** generally **discovers** everybody's face but their own " (Jonathan Swift) .Under the inspiration of this phrase, Toole has written his

novel with an obvious influence by Swift in his satirical presentation of characters and events . Toole finds himself alone in this world and he constantly yearns for a help to support and encourage him in his effort to reform the society and this is obvious in what he had written in one of his memoirs:

It is like stars, which simply pour down on us the calm of their bright and faithful being up to which we look and out of which we gather the deepest calm and courage. No humble man or woman can really be strong or gentle, pure and good without the world being better for it, without somebody being helped and comforted by the very existence of that goodness (<https://2013omega point>)

Jonathan Swift had great influence on John Kennedy Toole in that the book's title refers to an epigraph from Swift's essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects". Where man is located at a given scene of his being a junction related to literary movements .

Naturalism is a **nineteenth century** movement that accompanied the great philosophical and intellectual changes in the western society. It tried to apply the principles of science, experimental science, on literature and the novel in particular. Emile Zola, the French novelist and theorist showed the foundation of Naturalism as lying in the principles of heredity and environment. The philosophy that results from this movement is very gloomy and deterministic. Man appears to be the victim of harsh environment and is unable to

change, thus there is a great degree of depression and sadness in the world of Naturalists such as Faulkner, Hemingway, Chekov and Ibsen.

A Confederacy of Dunces shares some of these views for it mingles the obscurity and savagery of the life by special treatment when the writer mixes the melancholy with comedy, and tries to reduce the terrible effect of this philosophy. The naturalist often describes the characters as though they were conditioned and controlled by environment and heredity, In Naturalism characters can be studied through their relationships to their surroundings, This method in study is in contrast with realism which focuses on everyday life and with Romanticism which concentrate on idealistic life.(Donald 1984)

The naturalist believes that the laws behind the forces that govern human lives might be studied and understood by using the scientific method to write their novels, and also by their instinct and passion, where the characters are governed by heredity and the environment. The situation of the protagonist Ignatius had all qualities of naturalism. Characters are courageous, and adventurous. Any reader would find these qualities in Ignatius's character. He or she expects that such man will be seeking any good opportunity to direct his life for happiness but his misery and frustration in a corrupted society show that man is not free to choose his adequate environment, but he is always , submissive to the influences of the community. Thus, Ignatius is atypically naturalist character whose fate is beyond his control.

1.3 John Kennedy Toole's biography

There are certain elements in Toole's life that have made him a depressed writer, and eventually led to his tragic suicide. Obviously he felt alienated from society and its sophisticated world. He expressed his great longing to medieval and simple modes of living and projected on his character, Ignatius who represents the qualities which were forbidden for him.

Toole was born on December 17/1937. His infancy was unhappy because of the bad relationship between his mother Thelma and her financially frustrated husband. This troubled marriage brought him to hell. Toole's mother had chosen his name because she belonged to an "old" family and the best way to achieve Social distinction **belonged** to an "old" family and **stick** to the ancient name somewhere on his birth certificate.

The black Creoles are descendants of Africans whose ancestors lived in the French or Spanish Louisiana. Both races of Creoles believed that heritage sets them apart from and above the late – coming Americans (Nevils & Hardy 2005) .

Thelma belonged to an ancient family. She played a vital role in the author's life as a little boy .One of the traditions she insisted on for her son was to train their boy to follow the parents tradition. Thus the boy would be expected to accompany his father on outings.

Toole lived a very great, short, successful life. He won an academic scholarship to Tulane University, studying English at Columbia University in New York City while he

was teaching at the same time at Hunter College. He also taught at various Louisiana Colleges and during his early career as an academic, he was valued on the faculty party circuit for his wit and gift for mimicry.

Toole was an editor of the school newspaper and maintained high marks through high school, received many accolades, including winning a National merit scholarship, selection to the National Honor society and being named the most intelligent senior boy by student body (N&H, pp.38- 40)

Toole had written two novels *The Neon Bible* (Grove Press, 1989) and *A Confederacy of Dunces* (LSU Press, 1980). His writing skills were praise worthy. They led him to suffer from paranoia and depression. He had thought that his dream to publish his two books was broken by the publisher's prevention or opposition.

year as a counselor, he also took part in New Man club, a Catholic Organization for teenagers. He won an award for outstanding student in the group. His favorite writer was Flannery O'Connor who is considered one of America's greatest fiction writers and one of the strongest apologists for Roman Catholicism in the twentieth century. She was a devout believer whose small but impressive body of fiction presents the soul's struggle with what she called the "stinking mad shadow of Jesus. "Her works (*Wise Blood*, 1952, *The Violent Bear It Away*, 1960) and Short story collections (*A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1955, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1965, *The Complete Stories*, 1971). These works have been compared with the *Neon Bible's* style , as a short novel of Southern Gothic Fiction Novels (N&H p. 42)

The master essay of John Kennedy Toole was on the Elizabethan dramatist John Lyly which was made easier by the fact that he also wrote his honor thesis at Tulane on Lyly, Toole's favorite singer was Frances Faye And his most favorite artist was Marilyn Monroe.

John Kennedy Toole felt that all his dreams and inspiration turned to be false. When classes resumed at Dominican after Christmas break in January of 1969, Toole was missing. His mother thought that he was going to visit friends in Lafayette, but the friends he was supposed to be visiting never saw

him. More than two months later, on March 26, Toole's body was discovered in his old Chevrolet in a wood near Biloxi, Mississippi.

He had purchased a length of garden hose, attached it to the exhaust pipe, and run it through the back window of the car. Receipts found by his body made it possible to piece together something about his last, sad odyssey. It appears that he went to California and visited San Simeon, the mansion of the Hearst family, then drove back east to Milledgeville, Georgia, the home of one of his late idols, Flannery O'Connor. There was also an envelope addressed to his parents that contained a suicide note. Thelma read it and destroyed it. She later gave varying version of what it contained.

It asked me and my husband to forgive him for what he had done and asked God to have mercy on his soul, she sometime said. But in unguarded moment, she confided that it contained "Insane Ravings". (N&H,p33)

Thelma has taken truth of the matter with her to the grave. Toole feels that his place is not here on the earth where the strangers and dunces live. He feels that all were in a

confederacy against his geniality. Finally he decided to return to home, but he stopped suddenly at the edge of road.

(Fletcher, pp.39, 40)

Many writers had a good opinion of John Kennedy Toole and his manuscript *A Confederacy of Dunces*. After reading it, some of them, like Robert Massello had the following opinion about the novel and its writer :

Democracy is nice when it comes to government but in the arts it is awfully fallible , just like John Kennedy Toole's could not get *A confederacy of Dunces* published until he was dead (Digest book 2005)

The publisher Walker Percy said:

I think it's remarkably resistant to Americanization, [although] I'm not saying that it is immune. John Kennedy Toole's book *A Confederacy of Dunces* shows the very distinctive quality, the ethnic quality of New Orleans, which very few book and writers have touched on. He may be one of the first really to do so.

His close friend Fisher said:

There is a temptation in the circumstances, to regard the book as a freak- a novel more notable for its history than for its merits, nearly a dozen New York publishers. *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a marvelous book. It may be a trifle shapeless and discursive, but that simply does not matter. Stuff, alive with vivid characters and true –to –life settings .Toole becomes a caricature of the fetal artist, while some of reviewer forgive Nivel and Hardy for their indiscretion, many friends of Toole found the book insidious. Toole's friend Joel Fletcher

angrily observed “The author has so carelessly written half-truth and untruths about friend who is not here to defend himself. (Fisher,p56)

But the most important opinion on Toole and his book was that of Cory MacLauchlan who gave a valuable comment on Toole's style and technique:

Publication of the manuscript hopeless and distorted it in a box. Years later he suffered a mental breakdown. Took a two months Journey across the United State and finally committed suicide on an inconspicuous road outside of Biloxi. Toole's style was an anonymous, omniscient narrator. [...] .Toole declared the tells *A Confederacy of Dunces*, primarily in the past tense. There are, however, a series of first person entries in the protagonist Ignatius self- serving and pretentious "journal of working boy" and trident letters between him and his activist former grill friend, Myrna Minkoff. **These** serve to show Ignatius and Myrna’s personal reaction to event and characters dealt with new truly by the narrator. **Toole** technique is outrageous exaggeration of each character’s overriding personality trait, repetition of each character's key word and action and the florid verbose articulation of Ignatius all combine to make a somewhat words and drown – out book, it is episodic and many of the characters do not meet or seem connected. Author is in control enough to tie all together incidents eventually contributes to the outcome leaving no loose end, (MacLauchlan 2004)

His fragility cracks the shell of comic bluster, revealing a deep streak of melancholy beneath the antic humor. John Kennedy Toole committed suicide in 1969 and never saw the publication of his novel. Ignatius Reilly is what he left behind, a fitting memorial to a talented and tormented life. (Alix Wilber 1987)

1.4 Statement of the problem

The present study reviews the thematic and technical aspects of the masterpiece of John Kennedy Toole *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Moreover, it points out the successful mixing between fun and seriousness in the novel's actions and situations.

1.5 Study Questions

The research attempts to answer the following three main questions:

1. How is social criticism addressed in *A Confederacy of Dunces*?
2. How did the author manage to bring comedy and seriousness together in *A Confederacy of Dunces*?
3. In what way did John Kennedy Toole succeed in raising intellectual matters in *A Confederacy of Dunces*?

1.6 Objectives of the study

This study aims at achieving the following two main goals:

- To highlight the societal criticism in *A Confederacy of Dunces* by the American novelist John Kennedy Toole by means of expressing the intellectual and social satire in the novel.
- To point out the successful mingling between fun and seriousness in *A Confederacy of Dunces*.
- To show the intellectual questions *A Confederacy of Dunces* addresses.

1.7 Significance of the study

The present study will explore social criticism and its dimensions addressed in Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. It will shed light on the writing techniques, thematic views which John Kennedy Toole used in addressing some intellectual topics in *A Confederacy of Dunces*. As such, the present study is important in that it may fill a gap in the library as regards the work of John Kennedy Toole.

1.6 Limitations and Limits of the Study

The study concentrates on one novel. In that respect, it cannot give a whole picture of Toole's writing .

- **Time:** The time of the study will be limited to the time of *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980).
- **Sample selected:** The study will concentrate on the novel, Therefore it cannot be generalized to his other works.

1.9 Definition of Terms:

1. Naturalism

A movement, especially in art and literature, advocating detailed realistic and factual description, especially in 19th-century France in the writings of Zola and Flaubert. It is also known as a school of painting or sculpture characterized by the faithful imitation of appearances for their own sake. **It is a fact** that all religious truth is based not on revelation, but rather on the study of natural causes and processes.

2. Picaresque Novel (*Picaro*)

Picaresque novel, early form of novel usually **first-person** narrative, relating the adventures of a rogue or lowborn adventurer (Spanish *pícaro*) as he drifts from place to place and from one social milieu to another in his effort to survive.

In its episodic structure the picaresque novel resembles the long, rambling romances of medieval chivalry, to which it provided the first realistic counterpart. Unlike the idealistic knight-errant hero, however, the *Picaro* is a cynical and amoral rascal who, if given half a chance, would rather live by his wits than by honorable work. The *Picaro* wanders about and has adventures among people from all social classes and professions, often just barely escaping punishment for his own lying, cheating, and stealing. He is a casteless outsider who feels inwardly unrestrained by prevailing social codes and mores, and he conforms outwardly to them only when it serves his own ends. The *Picaro*'s narrative becomes in effect an ironic or satirical

survey of the hypocrisies and corruptions of society, while also offering the reader a rich mine of observations concerning people in low or humble walks of life.

3. Dunce

A person who is slow at learning; a stupid person: he was baffled by arithmetic and they called him a dunce at school. In the Early 16th century: originally an epithet for a follower of John Duns Scotus whose followers were ridiculed by 16th-century humanists and reformers as enemies of learning.

The word is also used in poetry; *The Dunciad* is a landmark literary satire by Alexander Pope published in three different versions at different times.

4. Themes

The central point to a literary work, it may serve **more than** one theme or central idea in the same work. **In** *A Confederacy of Dunces* we find several themes including social, philosophical, economic and political themes

5. Structure

It is the organization or arrangement of element in a literary work. It includes ways of structuring a work such as chronological order, comparison and context cause and effect.

6. Social criticism:

It refers to a kind of writing that **concentrates on the wrong conditions in society**. Many authors receive their inspiration for writing their Literature from outside sources. The idea for a story could come from family, personal experiences, history, or even their own creativity. For authors that choose to write a book based on historical events, the inspiration might come from their particular viewpoint on

the event that they want to **dramatize just** like Ignatius “the character which can reflect in every one of us. Ignatius teaches us that our failure to fit in all of the time is actually a grace, and we should let it remind us that we do not belong to this world, but to another world far great (John Tintera 2004).

7. Satire:

A literary form that **criticizes** a subject or an object by making it ridiculous and by making fun of it to show scorn indignity. It is a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humor, irony, and exaggeration. It intends to improve humanity by criticizing its follies and foibles. A writer in a satire uses fictional characters, which stand for real people, to expose and condemn their corruption.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

The present chapter presents some books and articles which help in shedding some light on the reaction to and judgment of Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*.

2.1 Theoretical Review

Van Leer (1991) argues that *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a biting satire on the present – day society. What is to be revealed beneath the funny surface of the novel is a terrible attack on dubious values of modern consumer society. He argues that a great deal of Toole's severe criticism is coordinated with the society desire for conformity .It is then rather telling that this topic is found in *A Confederacy of Dunces* as well – the obsession with exposing secret communists is embodied in the character of Claude, the belief in the power of psychoanalysis is parodied through Mrs. Levy and Myrna Minkoff .

Ferrell's (1996) states that, *A Confederacy of Dunces* contains many strata. It seems a pleasant story at first, but the text proves itself highly complex when analyzed through a psychoanalytical looking glass. On the surface it is a humorous story, constructed by contrast, under this, there is real seriousness.

Walker Percy writes in the foreword of the novel, “I hesitate to use the word comedy - though comedy it is - because that implies simply a funny book, and this novel is a great deal more than that ...It is also sad. “One never quite knows where the sadness comes from (p:4).

Holditch's (1998), states that the main character, Ignatius Reilly's difference from all the other characters is very clear. Most of the characters in the book represent the ignorant in society; the Reilly's show the most striking display. Within the Reilly family, consisting

of mother and son, there is conflict and discord, the discord of which is almost unlikable to the conscientious reader. Ignatius' use of language extremely differs from the others. When he speaks to his mother, his vocabulary and the issues he is discussing, he puzzled her to such an extent that communication collapses. Toole alludes to the two basic elements that contribute to Ignatius' distinctive character in the very first paragraph when he introduces the main protagonist into the story. Ignatius passes the time observing the crowd closely his eyes looked down upon the other people.

Warshauer (2003) states in his article that the setting was the city of New Orleans in the early 1960. The novel employs a collection of colorful, and often rather eccentric characters whose lives become increasingly and inevitably intertwined as the story unfolds. From the formal point of view, the novel is structured as a multi-plot narrative – the main storyline, carried by the novel's central protagonist Ignatius is complemented by several sub-plots that bear no relation to it at the beginning. All the plot lines, however, begin to interweave gradually as the main character's story is developed. Thus, the character of Ignatius performs the function of a linking element that brings the novel's other characters together and subsequently, the whole story to its climax.

Hariu's (2006) argues that the use of a grotesque principal character sharpens Toole's criticism of the modern world through the conflicts that the grotesque creates within and around Ignatius. It is the portrayal of persistent discrimination based on one's color of skin that makes it possible to interpret *A Confederacy of Dunces* not only as a satirical picture of modern world in general, but also as depiction of a specific period of history of the American South.

Astrid Erll points out that even **though**, on the one hand works of fiction should not be seen as accurate historical **document**, it is on the other hand impossible to view them as completely separated from the reality in which they were created (p.90).

John Kennedy **Toole's** own comments on his novel seem to confirm this:

The book is not autobiography: neither is it altogether invention. While the plot is manipulation and juxtaposition of characters, with one or two exceptions the people and places in the book are drawn from observation and experience. I am not in the book: I have never pretended to be. But I am writing about things that I know, and in recounting these, it's difficult not to feel them. (Fletcher, p.113)

Tomoiağă's study (2010) aims at exploring the elements of the picaresque in contemporary British fiction. This study looks back at the picaresque, with its Spanish roots, and especially with its tradition in English literature **The Arab influence may account for the negative portrayal of priests and other church officials in *Lazarillo*, Arab literature, which was read widely in Spain in the time of Al-Andalus and possessed a literary tradition with similar themes, is thus another possible influence on the picaresque style. Al-Hamadhani of Hamadhan (Iran) is credited with inventing the literary genre of *maqamat* in which a wandering vagabond makes his living on the gifts his listeners give him following his extemporaneous displays of rhetoric, erudition, or verse (James 1983).** Then, it comes to contemporary times, and identifies elements of the picaresque in contemporary novels. The study argues that the picaresque has never left the literary scene in Britain, being an aesthetic invariant, which expresses a natural inclination of the British authors towards the picaresque story. Postcolonial authors also favor this genre as a consequence of their own literary tradition, which includes particular variants of the picaresque, and as a result of

their own situation as immigrant/displaced authors, which gives them material for stories of displaced characters rogues. The study rigorously identifies the sources of the contemporary protocols of the picaresque, as well as a few variants of picaresque stories in a selection of novels the author accounts for theoretically.

Leighton's study (2011) uses the evidence held in John Kennedy Toole's papers located at Tulane University to investigate many literary works and authors who may have been possible influences on his novel *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Part One is a catalog of evidence about authors, texts, and characters to which *Confederacy* has been compared, including Boethius, Chaucer, John Lyly, Edmund Spenser, Cervantes. The study found that in *Confederacy* Ignatius Reilly is an agent of Fortuna and fulfills a role occupied by the planetary god Saturn in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale". Some critics have called Toole's outlook deterministic. Moreover, they found that, Toole's papers contain direct evidence that Toole had at least a passing knowledge of Falstaff in Shakespeare and indirect evidence that he likely had knowledge of Don Quixote.

Jónsson's study (2012) aims at situating the novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole within the genre of picaresque fiction. The study contextualizes *A Confederacy of Dunces* within this generic discussion, first by examining the origins and etymology of the terms.

Picaro "and" Picaresque and then by looking at the social circumstances which gave rise to it. The study found that the style of double allegory also exists at a different level as Ignatius feels he is stuck to Fortuna's wheel:

The universe, of course, is based upon the principle of the circle within the circle. At the moment, I am in an inner circle. Of course, smaller circles within this circle are also possible. (Toole. P.90)

Pal's study (2013) aims at examining the life and works of John Kennedy Toole, focusing on his 1981 Pulitzer Prize winning novel *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Through reviewing the related literature, the study reveals that John Kennedy Toole had finished the novel in 1966 and, after failing to rework his manuscript to his editor's satisfaction, he shelved the project. Following this, he displayed symptoms typical of paranoid schizophrenia and he took his own life at the age of 31. In his novel, Toole parodies both psychoanalysis and the practice of psychiatry at the time, with a strong overlap with the emerging perspectives critical of psychiatry popularized by figures such as Szasz, Laing and Foucault. Toole's life and work have relevance for psychiatrists interested in the relationship between creativity and mental illness, attitudes towards psychiatry in the 1960s, and the interplay between societal values and judgments of mental health.

2.2. Empirical Review

Bedford (1987), conducted a study titled "All Toole's Children: A Reading of *A Confederacy of Dunces*". The article presents an analysis of the novel. According to the author, the novel is of high hilarity and low humour. He explains that the book tells a story about the physical and the psychological abuse of children. He states that the moral abuse of children in the novel is a thematic constant.

Kline's study (1999) presents a critical analysis of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, a southern novel by John Kennedy Toole. It gives information about the publication history

of the book, **plot** and main characters of the story; **information** on metonymic reading that provides to its readers. The study found out that the **novel** is a view with a comic or absurd surface beneath which lies a feeling for the human reality which approaches the tragic.

Hariu's (2006) finds that John Kennedy Toole presents a compelling criticism of modern society in *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Ignatius Reilly, who frequently criticized everything is the principal character of this novel, colors the narrative with a poignant humor. That simultaneously evokes both laughter and pity from readers. Also, the action of the novel revolves around Ignatius's experience in society as he shifts from one job to another with his ever present sense of superiority. The clearest means of grotesque conflict in *A Confederacy of Dunces* is between Ignatius and the characters in the novel Toole was once captivated during a stroll by a poor woman beating her child because he was playing in the winter cold without a coat. Fletcher writes: "Ken mimicked the Elysian Fields mother braining her child while voicing such concern over his welfare, chuckling to himself, delighted by the comic irony" (qtd. in Palumbo 61). Such gaping inconsistency between word and deed demonstrated by this mother is exactly the type of conflict seen in Ignatius's character. Ignatius considers himself a genius and rationalizes any self-admitted shortcomings by concluding that he is an "anachronism" (Toole 78), truly belonging in his beloved medieval age.

Bernard's study (2007) aims at making a comparison between *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Sons and Lovers* to figure out the similarities between *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Sons and Lovers*.

Two of the strong themes in the novel are protagonist's inept social skills and his delayed sexual development. Regarding these themes, an **interested** may be drawn between

Toole's novel and D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913) . In regarding to the relationship between Ignatius and Mrs. Reilly ,the mother who suffered much from her careless son who always refuse to bear the responsibility and found her as a loving womb and never lived away from her depending on himself , just like Gertrude and William who engaged with each others as a son and mother till William can ever make a good relation with other women away from her mother quality .

Matula's study (2009) aims at overviewing the main characteristics of the novel. Particular attention is paid to the defining features of John Kennedy Toole's humor. Also it sheds light on the nature of the causal links between events within the narrative. The key components of Ignatius' worldview are then described, which establishes the basis for the subsequent interpretation of the role that Ignatius and his worldview assume in the novel's criticism of society. The study finds that Toole endows his characters, and especially Ignatius, with a great deal of ambiguity, which results in a number of possible interpretations. The interpretation that is offered in this thesis is based on the contrast between the characters of Ignatius and Jones, and the varying degrees of their credibility that have been identified as one of the features of their opposition. In other words, Ignatius' hypocrisy and the disparity between his words and actions are in stark contrast to Jones' sincerity and his quite ordinary dream of a better life.

The critic goes on to say something related to Toole's two basic elements that contribute to Ignatius' distinctiveness in the very first paragraph when he introduces the main protagonist into the story. Ignatius passes the time observing the crowd closely while his "eyes looked down upon the other people" (Toole 1). This may be interpreted literally

as a reference to his tall stature which makes him tower above the passers-by, but also figuratively as a reference to his disdainful attitude towards others which stems from his conviction of the superiority of his worldview.

Brown's study (2009) aims at analysing the characters of the novel, and expressing the satiric theme through its lines. The study found out that the narrative of *A Confederacy of Dunces* cuts short, leaving an ambiguous element about its actions. The main character remains surrounded by many black spots so that his character is not fully disclosed. Although there are points of optimism and humour, the protagonist remains far from clear to the reader . **Readers may not be able to cope with Ignatius' ugly face and its bothering nature. However, they can see an enjoy his comic postures.**

Toole died very young and did not publish much, he established his name in American literature through one novel that has fascinated readers and critics alike.

Chapter three

3.0 Research Methodology:

This study follows the descriptive and analytic methodology to investigate the thematic and technical dimensions in John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. This thesis examines the themes and ideas embodied in this novel besides discussing the technical aspects used by the author in writing and structuring his work.

3.1 Methods:

This study tries to utilize the social criticism approach in discussing *A Confederacy of Dunces*. It highlights the intellectual and social satire in the novel, and the successful mingling of fun and seriousness in this novel and employs the strategies used by social criticism. This approach implies a close textual reading with special concentration on society and social behaviour. Special attention will therefore be given to references to and commentaries on the society presented in this novel. In addition, the study will make use of the picaresque tradition and its methods to show the intellectual and technical aspect of *A Confederacy of Dunces* addresses. In addition to the social criticism approach, the study makes use of the formalist approach and technical aspect of *A Confederacy of Dunces* addresses. This requires paying attention to literary devices, language, imagery, symbol and other figures of speech. Additionally, there will be reference to literary allusion, intertextuality, parody and other relevant devices.

3.2 Procedures of the Study:

1. Reading the biography of John Kennedy Toole.
2. Tracing the origin of the Picaresque novel, and its famous novelists.
3. Exploring previous studies related to the topics of the social criticism and social satire
4. Discussing the findings.
5. Writing a chapter containing the conclusion and the appropriate recommendations.

The main discussion of the subject is carried out in chapter four. In this chapter reference will be made to the critical approaches mentioned earlier. The theoretical background will be utilized in discussing, analysing and explaining both the themes and the literary techniques employed in the selected novel.

Chapter four

The main objective of this chapter is to discuss two main points. The first one is discussing the major themes in *A Confederacy of Dunces* and the second one is to explain the technical devices which were employed in it in. The following discussion, the focus will be on such themes as American Dream and Social Criticism, Race and Slavery, Education, Fate and Will and Technical View as Modern Picaresque Art and Narrative Technique.

4.1 Thematic view

4.1.1 American dream and social criticism

This novel starts with an epigraph from Jonathan Swift that “When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, which the dunces are all in confederacy against him”. (Toole, p.3). That means that there is a problem of understanding between the one who is a true genius and the others who are known as dunces. More often than not, a genius is at first resisted by his rivals as well as by his community. John Kennedy Toole starts his manuscript *A Confederacy of Dunces* by giving a detailed description of his main character Ignatius J. Reilly, the protagonist of the novel, The Genius or The Picaro as he saw himself and the oaf as the others who surrounded him saw his real fact .

This lens is used by the writer to express his disillusionment with the new bad traditions of American society as he saw them.

Inspired by the American dream, those who immigrated to the new world had thought that they ultimately found a country which was full by idealism. Every Spanish, African or British individual spent his early life on this continent to build Platonic city in which everybody has equal chance in wealth and work or what is called “American dream”, the first theme in this novel .

This dream has turned into a nightmare by the concept of Capitalism, which destroyed all values of the American society in general and the American family in particular. This happened when the authority of money controlled people's behaviors, actions, and conventions. The prosperity or high income for each individual turned into poverty and feudality.

Ignatius is an educated man who is really disappointed with the life and with the people around him. He finds that in spite of his high academic degree, he cannot find a decent job and he has to do different tasks such as selling hotdogs and doing other odd works.

Therefore we see that he is using his high education for the purpose of insulting people who were characterized by superficiality and constantly seeking money. He is related to the medieval period, and finds that there is no clear evidence that leads the people to feel that they are living during the period of the American dream.

After a period in which western world had enjoyed order, tranquility, unity, and oneness with its True God and Trinity, there appeared wind of change which spelled evil days ahead. A wind blows no one good. the luminous years of Abelard , Thomas a Becket, and Everyman dimmed into dross, Fortuna's wheel had turned on humanity, crushing its collarbone, smashing its skull, twisting its torso, puncturing its pelvis, sorrowing its soul. Having once been so high

humanity fell so **low**. What had once been dedicated to the soul was now dedicated to the sale. (Toole, p. 56)

Here, we see that writer justifies the changes which have taken place in western world after along time of tranquility and refers to famous figures of that period such as Abelard and Thomas a Becket but everything changes into dirt, the world is controlled by the power of goodness fortune wheel and what once been dedicated to the soul was now dedicated to the **sale**. The same tradition is found in *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller where the main character "Willy" talks to his wife about something that has been lost in modern life but which used to exist in the past. Thus, there is no longer love or sympathy. Then, he goes to death with the false idea that Biff, his young son, will one day be a famous businessman.

Willy finds that there is **no equal** opportunity or chance for each individual as the concept of American dream has theorized.

Like Willy Lowman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* desperate to pay off the money, Mrs. J.Rielly had the same dream. She wants Ignatius to find a job to pay off the money after she smashed her car against the wall. Threatened with jail, she urges her son to secure the badly needed money. She wants him to go out of his dirty room and change his life. Both of them fall in permanent quarrel, that while the mother was poor, the son lives in a false world of reform and ambition.

Mrs., J.Rielly: "Tomorrow we looking at the want ads in the paper, you gonna dress up and go find you a job."

Ignatius: that is out of the question, it would bring all of my latent anxieties a head and the result, I fear, would be very ugly indeed, I would not want to have **to spend** the remainder of your life caring for a

lunatic locked away somewhere in the attic, we shall not mortgage the house , you must have some **money** somewhere .(Toole,p.53)

The power of money has become a central factor in America, it is the source of happiness. Their relationship has lost its meaning .Without money there is nothing but vagrancy.

Mr. and Mrs. Levy, Jews have inherited Levy pant factory in which Ignatius lead other black workers to upset against the bad feudality system of low-paid salary. Their relationship based on their thriving Pants Company. Money has become the central factor in their life. It is for this reason that they are on bad terms with one another, with each partner. Trying to have control over the other, they were living in luxury, but Mr. Levy endured and tolerated Mrs. Levy

Mrs. Levy: I can't get on that thing tonight, my hair was **done** today – she touched the high plasticized curls of her Platinum hair “the hair dresser told me that I should get a wig, too, I want a brunette wig. That way I can change my personality, you've thrown your father’s business down drain that tragedy of your life.

Mr. Levy: Christ, who **would like** that old factory? Nobody **is buying** the kind of pants they make any more that's all my father’s fault. (Toole, p.190)

She has a lot of money but **as a greedy person**, she yearns for more and more. Her husband has inherited a factory but he has intensely marginalized her. When an individual tries to achieve any kind of professional success, his hard work continually goes unrewarded by the people who have the decision, and do not respect those who

are working hard and are honest. For instance, Mr. Gonzales is a worker in Levy's pants factory with a very low salary. He loves his job but it brings him nothing.

On the other hand, the owner who is very lazy, rarely visits his company, and has a very bad relationship with his two daughters Sandra and Susan. All he cares about is money and financial success. Father daughter relationship depends on money and the father does not pay any attention to his two daughters. Mrs. Levy is also disappointed with her husband and tries to have more money. That is why she is constantly critical of her husband and accusing him of neglecting the company which he originally inherited from his father,

That's right. Think about yourself as usual. If your father could only see you today. Mrs. Levy's aqua lids rose in horror. "A moth-eaten playboy for ticks " [...] Mrs. Levy held up a warning hand, plump and ringed. Don't worry about this neglected creature {Miss Trixie} I've taken under my wing. Don't worry about me either. Forget your little daughter's get in your sport car and ride, there are gatta this afternoon. Look, you can see the sails from the picture window I had installed with your father hard -earned money.

(Toole, pp. 191-195 }

We see the same bad relationship between Ignatius and his mother, who feels that her son is unable to bring her sufficient money and she gradually feels that Ignatius has become a serious obstacle in her way. This difficult situation leads her to decide to send her son to a lunatic asylum (mental health hospital) in order to relieve herself from this intolerable burden.

In the center of the room. A stocky woman with kinky gray hair was dancing alone on the linoleum, shaking her pendulous which were slung blouse. Her bowling hips back and forth between shoes pounded the floor purposefully, carrying the swinging breasts and rotating hips back and forth between the table and the stove. So this was patrolman Mancuso's aunt. Only Patrolman Mancuso could have something like that for an aunt, Ignatius snorted to himself " Whoo! " Mrs .

Reilly screamed gaily." Santa! "Watch this , kids , " this gray – haired woman screamed back like a prizefight referee and began shaking lower and lower until she was almost on the floor .

“Oh, my God " Ignatius said to the wind. “You gonna bust a gut, girl, “Mrs. Reilly laughed." You gonna go through my good floor." " Maybe you better stop. Aunt Santa," Patrolman Mancuso said morosely. "Hell, I ain't stopping now. I just got here “the woman answered, rising rhythmic ally. (Toole p. 107)

We are told that , Patrolman Mancuso, Mrs. J. Reilly and Aunt Santa are meeting to get rid of Ignatius and curse him.

Who says a grandma can't dance no more?" Holding her arms outward, the woman bumped across the Linoleum runway." lord! “Mrs. Reilly said and guffawed, tipping bottle to her glass.' what if Ignatius comes home and sees this “Fuck Ignatius. (Toole pp. 107 -108)

All of those who constituted an American family have stood in confederacy against Ignatius, and his attempts at reforming the American society.

F.Scott Fitzgerald , Arthur Miller and John Kennedy Toole seem to have believed that the American dream was no longer a nice dream but it gradually tuned to be a tendency to search for wealth and money not morality .

Disregarding any moral or ethical values, the dream also does not include the interests of ordinary people who have remained poor and marginalized by the power of Capitalism. This negative view of the American Dream seems to be the most dominant attitude among the majority of critics. On other hand, we sometimes find another opinion which argues that the American dream is still valid and has its significant role in American life. For instance, the researcher Paul Taylor said:

America is not breaking at the seams, the American dream is not dying our new racial and ethnic complexion has not triggered massive outbreak of intolerance. Our generation is not at each other's throats. They are living more interdependently than any time in recent memory, become that turns to be a good coping strategy in hard time. Our nation face huge challenges, not doubt. So do the rest of world aging economic powers. If you had to pick a nation with the right stuff to ride out the coming demographic storm, you be crazy not to choose America, warts and all (Taylor , p. 15)

Taylor also informs us that the fault is not with America but with the lazy and unplanning generation which has turned American society into one of aging economy.

Mrs. Reilly is disappointed with her son because he stood against the American middle-class values. She believes that the idea of American dream of financial success and material comfort is a very successful concept by which any country can build its glory.

However, we find that she has an extreme version of this dream, being obsessed with money just like other members in this Capitalist country. Ignatius, in contrast, totally rejects this way of success and dislikes the emphasis on

monetary wealth which he seems to identify with the entire American middle class. His view is that new and expensive clothes are "offenses against taste and decency" and he expresses his contempt for grooming and material comfort.(p.231)

Ignatius is looking for spirituality; he rejects the focus on money and material success alone. However, he fails in his attempt to go against traditional American values of success and prosperity.

Ignatius's mother, Mrs. Reilly, does not accept her son's views because in her opinion they do not measure to the standards of success established by her slice of society, therefore she labels him a failure and eventually tries to put him in a mental hospital.

Ignatius feels disdain for the commercial world that surrounds him, putting his own version of history on his Big Chief tablets "What had once been dedicated to the soul was now dedicated to the sale." His feeling is so strong that it has developed into an obsession inside himself. Even more, he spends hours in front of television and he frequently goes to the movie theater, not for the sake of entertainment but to criticize the products as something for being absurd and meaningless without utilitarian use and for their lack of decency or good taste.

In Chapter Two we see Ignatius watching T.V program for children while his mother and **patrolman** Mancuso are talking about the accident. He carelessly says:

Oh, my God ! Ignatius bellowed from the front of the house
 “What an egregious insult to”

Don't pay him no mind,' Mrs. Reilly advised the startled
 policeman [Mancuso] ' he does that all the time, he looks at T.V .
 A settlement ' that he wants some money, huh? ' [...] “Do I
 believe the total perversion that I am witnessing?” Ignatius
 screamed from the parlor the music had a frantic, tribal rhythm; a
 chorus of Falsettos sang insinuatingly about loving all night long.
 [...] “The children on that program should all be gassed ' Ignatius
 said as he strode into the kitchen.

(Toole, p 44)

Mr. Gonzalez and Officer Mancuso represent the other face of the American dream.
 They work hard and strive to succeed in their chosen professions, but their hard work
 continually goes unrewarded. **In the case of Gonzalez and Mr. Levy "the laziness " is
 the quality that makes a deference between the poor - active employee with law- pad
 salary and the lazy- rich owner with prosperity** . Patrolman Mancuso loves power
 and catching suspicious characters, although he has shown a tendency to overdo it
 imprudently.

When he comes into the precinct and presents a possible lead to his boss, the Sergeant
 dismisses his information as untrustworthy.

Mr. Gonzalez comes early every day to Levy Pants Factory and tries to devote
 himself to his work to live at the edge of life while the factory owner who is lazy and
 rarely comes to his inherited factory, lives a very comfortable life. We see that
 contrary to the promise of the American dream, it is not hard working but other
 factors (as being the son of Leon Levy) that lead to financial achievement in this part of
 America.

The loss of childhood innocence is an obvious characteristic of the American modern society; the roles **which** were acted by Lana Lee and George are converted, Lana has taken a nude photo of herself in very libertine situation and she has employed George as her messenger to take this pornographic picture to the orphans and school students. She bears responsibility for the high school pornography scandal in the city of Orleans. She had taken her photograph to seduce the children and obtain dirty money at the expense of the children's early adolescence. She turns them into an instrument for corrupting young minds and she uses her body to exploit children and corrupt the young. This situation suggests that wealth is not the **equivalent to** success or happiness.

Toole is against this behavior and against all forms of sexual **promiscuity**. He would not like to give himself unlimited freedom and this leads him to be accused of homosexuality. Myrna Minkoff's character is created to represent Toole's deep spiritual desire and Ignatius is invented to represent Toole as reasonable **man**. **Ignatius** lives a very low and very boring life and has no aim in making a family; Ignatius and Myrna have wildly divergent worldviews. She represents the American **middle class's consumerism**, but Ignatius constantly represents the opposite attitude. He hates everything modern or commercial.

On the whole Ignatius seems to be against the idea of the American dream that has been dominant in American life and in American **literature**. **Though** the traditional ideology of the American dream emphasizes hard work, self – reliance and economic prosperity, **Ignatius** is a very lazy fellow who prefers to depend on other people for his livelihood including his mother. He hates work or having a job except when he feels he

is in bad need for the money he can earn in contrast with the values of the American society that have high esteem for hard work and economic success. **Thus**, he remains a man of abstract ideals. In this way he is in sharp contrast with his mother and many other characters. In this novel Ignatius's mother loves work and money and values people on the basis of the material possessions. **She would like** to marry Claude Robichaux only after **when she becomes sure** that he is rich. However, Toole shows that money and material success do not necessarily create the means of happiness. The fact is that Mr. Levy who is a rich man and possesses all that wealth which can buy, cannot achieve real happiness. Ignatius has a good reason for challenging the American dream.

Subconsciously you feel that you must attempt to explain away your failure as an intellectual and solder of ideas, to actively participate in critical social movement. Also, a satisfying sexual encounter would purify your mind and body. You need the therapy of sex desperately **I'm** a fraud – from what I know about clinical cases like yours – that you may end up a psychosomatic invalid like Elizabeth **browning**. I don't feel much sympathy for you; you have closed your mind to both love and society. At the moment my every working hour is spent in helping some dedicated friends raise money for a bold and shattering movie that they are planning to film about an interracial marriage [...]. You, of course, would be fantastic for the part. **You see, Ignatius, if** you would just to cut the umbilical cord that bind you to that stagnant **city, that** mother of yours , and that bed , you could be up here having opportunities like **this**. **Are** you interested in part? We can't pay much, but you can stay with me [...]. “Don't write to me again until you've taken part. I hate cowards. (Toole, pp. 83-84)

In this respect Toole mixed between religion and reality when he uses the biblical expression “The love of money is the root of all evil” Moreover, Toole’s linkage between wealth and religion represents the strongest parallel between *A Confederacy of Dunces* and Thoreau’s famous work *Walden*.

The love of money is the root of evil encapsulate the serious message underlying Toole's comic novel. Toole’s develops this thesis through three recurring and loosely interconnected motifs: the conflict between the spiritual and the material, which is embodied in the juxtaposition of the words (soul and sale), Thoreau recognizes the pursuit of wealth as the foundation of American society, complaining that Americans have traded the material for the spiritual “We now no longer camp as if for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven. We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of agree-culture “(M.McCluskey, P.8)

4.1.2 Race and Slavery

Slavery is a major theme in *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Though it was seen as a thing of the past, in the United State this problem remained a tangible one especially in the American South. Indeed, in the novel, the African characters are shown as the victims of economic slavery. They are treated as second – class citizens who have no equal rights with the whites. Though none of the characters works literally as a slave, some of them particularly Burma Jones, lives under the pressure of a hard discrimination life. At that time, any colored person would be sent to jail if he became jobless therefore he is obligated to be enslaved.

It is the times of white politicians in South Carolina who're making fools of themselves by claiming that Confederate battle flag doesn't have to do with slavery and segregation! They say they are just trying to honor their "Southern heritage" by flying it over statehouse. Now, that's really STUPID! Everybody knows that until Martin Luther King Jr. came along, the so-called Southern way of life that the flag symbolizes was based on keeping black folks separate and unequal Pretending otherwise is ridiculous.(White,p.1)

Since the end of the American Civil War, private and official use of the Confederacy's flags, and of flags with derivative designs, has continued under philosophical, political, cultural, and racial controversy in the United States. These flags have ever bear a reference to the indigenous or black people in their color or design. Even Martin Luther King who is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs, was very innocent when he belief of equality between black and white .

The theme of slavery comes to the forefront when Burma Jones, the young black man, is arrested for stealing some cashew nuts .This arrest seems to be unjustifiable as there is no evidence to prove this. In fact Jones denies the accusation and says he does not like cashew nuts at all.

Jones: Cawminss! Ooo-Woo if I call a po-lice A Cawmniss I'll find myself in Angola right now for sure. I like to call one of them mother a Cawmniss , though, like this afternoon I standing wools worth and some cat steal a bag of cashew nuts out the "Nut House " star screaming like she been stab. Hey ! The net thing a flo' walk grabbing me , and then a police mother dragging me off . A man ain got a chance. Whoa! – His lips sucked at cigarette – "Nobody finding them Cashews on me , but that police still dragging me off . I think that flo' walk a cawmiss . (Toole, p.18)

When Jones is released from prison, he states that he must find a job or he will be arrested again for vagrancy charges. Jones's words remind us of the period in the 1960s when the city of Orleans was viewed as a city that consisted of a superior white race and an inferior black race. As a result Jones remains vulnerable and is always liable to be sent to jail. Consequently, he has to **accept** a job even though it may be very mean and underpaid. **Thus**, he works as a floor sweeper and is forced to accept a pay lower than the minimum wage. Jones does all this in order to escape arrest:

Jones to Lana Lee: I ain exactly a character yet, but I can tell they gonna star that vagrancy no visible means of support stuff on me [...] I thought maybe the Night of Joy like to help somebody keep the picket off, give the night of joy a good civil right rat in. (Toole, become of the community, help keep a poor color boy outta jail .I p.35)

In fact, the Levy Pant Factory contains a large number of African Americans who receive low wages and are not well treated. On entering the factory, Ignatius exclaims that it is a mechanized Negro Slavery; it represents the progress which the Negro has made from picking it" to tailoring it, a reference to the manual work of slaves on the farm in the past and their current employment in factories to manufacture pants. In both cases, American blacks are exploited and maltreated by their white masters.

Obviously, Ignatius is satirical and his sarcastic comment may be taken to represent Toole's personal view of the problem that Levy Pants Factory is **facing**. It is full of African Americans suffering from modern slavery as they did in the Plantation. This

symbolizes the Slavery of African workers in the past and in the **present**. Hence, Toole's obvious condemnation of such practice.

Toole is dealing with a traditional theme from a new perspective. The story of slavery is actually revisited and seen from a new perspective. Instead of being based on labor as it was in the past, **an economic slavery based on jobs and employment**. Without a job, Jones will always be liable for arrest. He is, therefore, forced to accept his poor labor condition in order to survive in a society where the superiority of the white race over the black race is the rule of the day and the general public has to accept the decision of the makers and those who control the economy and the political system in this state, Louisiana. Without any kind of humanity, Jones has fallen in the hands of feudalism. Toole depicts the way by which the American whites enslave the black people and how those **black people** are exploited, For instance, we read:

Take those glasses off. How the hell can you see all that crap on the floor? Stop knocking that broom against the bar Lana screamed. Goddamit to hell, you making me nervous. Jones response; you want quiet sweeping, you get you old lady. I sweep yawing.
Lana: you better be a glad I'm giving you a chance, boy, there is plenty colored boys looking for work these days
Jones response : Yea , and trey's plenty color boy turn in vagrant , too, when they see what kind wage people offer in , sometime I think if you color , better to be vagrant .(Toole, p. 73)

Like others black men, Jones wants to live a stable life of an ordinary human being. He wants to be loved, not suspected. He wants to be free, not arrested. He is constantly **seeking liberty**. This is what the writer has referred to in one of his articles

which he included in his book through his main character Ignatius who was sitting in his room alone writing his thoughts .

I do admire the terror which Negroes are able to inspire in the hearts of some members of white Proletariat and only wish that I possessed the ability to similarly **terrorize**. The Negro terrorizes simply by being himself ; I , however , must browbeat a bit in order to achieve the same **end**. **Perhaps** I should have been a Negro. I suspect that I would have been rather large and terrifying one, continually pressing my ample thing against the withered things of old white ladies public conveyance a great deal and eliciting more than one shriek of panic. Then, too if I were a Negro, I would not been pressured by my mother to find a good job, for no good jobs would be **available**. **My** mother herself , a worn old Negress , would be too broken by years of underpaid labor as a domestic to go out bowling at night. She and I could live most pleasant in some moldy shack in the slum in a state of ambitionless peace, realizing contentedly that we were unwanted , that striving was meaningless (Toole ,p. 127)

Capitalism is used as another means to enslave people whether they were white or black. This situation is apparent in *A Confederacy of Dunces* and in many different places: This fact shows that enslavement is an everlasting phenomenon in American society and is practiced not only on black people but also on the white Protestants.

From a Marxist view point, the novel would appear as a clear condemnation of Capitalism which lead to one class that controls another one. The first example is the protagonist, an educated figure with a fat ugly body and brilliant revolutionary brain, putting him in very humiliating job to satisfy his mother's willingness to supply her needs for money. Ignatius is therefore forced by the Capitalist system to live a life of human slavery and economic bondage. Despite his intelligent and pioneering ideas, he is rejected by his society which labels him as oaf, lazy and useless:

Ignatius was thinking to make a deal with the old man of paradise vendor hot dog - do not I need clearance from the health department or something? I mean I might have something beneath my fingernails that is very debilitating to the human system .Incidentally; do you get your entire vendor this way? Your hiring practices are hardly in step with contemporary police. I feel as if I've been shanghaied. I am too apprehensive to ask how you go about firing your employees. (Toole , P.163)

Ignatius is a victim of the capitalist system. He is jobless and the only way left for him is to accept a menial job that is incompatible with his education. Like the author himself who found that there was no one to appreciate his valuable masterpiece *A Confederacy of Dunces*, Ignatius has to do a lower work and to be satisfied with his low wages . Rejecting the pressure and dictates of the capitalist system, Ignatius tries to reform the current economic system and **replace** it with a fairer system as we can see in the following argument

Slavery is not a horror safely consigned to the past; it continues to exist throughout the world, even in developed countries like France and the united states across the world slaves work and sweat and build and suffer [...] . Slave touches your life indirectly as well. They made the bricks for the factory that made the TV you watch [...] slavery is a booming business and the number of slave is increasing people get rich by using slave . And when they have finished with their slavery, they just throw these people away. This is new slavery which focuses on a big profits and cheap lives. it is not about owning people in the traditional sense of the old slavery , but about controlling them completely . People become completely disposable tool for making money. (Bales, p.4)

The problem of **slavery** is an everlasting one and there is no way to put an end to race discrimination. Even though some blacks may assume important positions such as

the presidency of United **State. Black** people and all colored people remain a group which is discriminated against and unfairly **treated. The** feeling of persecution and oppression leads the black workers in Levy Pants Factory to join Ignatius who called himself a reformer and got them to demonstrate against the Major, the man who belonged to middle class. Despite the failure of Ignatius to lead a racial demonstration at Levy Pants factory, the novel seems to suggest a clear condemnation of racism and social discrimination. Similarly, the novelist shows sympathy for Jones who tries to take revenge on Lana Lee for her exploiting and mistreating him:

In a sense I have always felt something of a Kinship with the colored race because its position is the same as mine: we both outside the inner realm of American society. [...] it is apparent that of the Negroes wish to become active members of American middle **class**. I cannot imagine why. I must admit that this desire on their part leads me to question their value **judgment. If** they wish to join the bourgeoisie. It is really none of my **business. They** may seal their own doom personally; I would agitate quite adamantly if I suspected that anyone was attempting to help me upward toward the middle class. I would agitate t the bemused person who was attempting to help me upward, that **is. The** agitation would take the form of many protest marches complete with the banner and posters, but these would say “End the Middle Class. (Toole, p. 126)

On the whole, the book makes fun of slavery in its different forms and shapes. The novel uses humor and satire in its treatment of slavery and human exploitation as we

shall see later. It uses race as a backdrop for humor and satire. Despite his enthusiasm and good intentions, Ignatius failed in his intentions and no one accepted his notions.

4.1.3 Education and Social Reform

A *Confederacy of Dunces* shows an obvious interest in education. Ignatius, the protagonist, is a well-educated man. He is the genius against whom the dunces have confederated to scheme against and finally put an end to his plans to reform modern society and the world. **As a man who adheres to medieval period's tradition**, Ignatius reads ancient philosophy from which he derives most of his peculiar ideas and his belief in the "wheel of **fortune**". Although he prides himself on his expansive and learned world view, Ignatius hates leaving his home **town**. **He** thinks of himself as philosopher in the tradition of the **medieval** philosopher Boethius.

Professor Talc is also involved in teaching and learning. He is professor at Tulane University where Ignatius and Myrna Minkoff were studying.

Toole, himself taught at Tulane, The novel is making some jokes at university **life**. **Dr.Talc**, for example, is terrorized by students and is often mocked because of his ignorance of the subject he is teaching.

In class she had insulted and challenged and vilified him at every turn, egging the Reilly monster to join in the attack. He would never forget those two; no one on faculty ever would. They were like to Huns sweeping down on Rome. **Dr.Talc** idly wondered if they had married each other. Each certainly deserved the other. Perhaps they had both defected to Cuba "Some of those historical characters are so **dull**."

That's very true, Talk agreed, eager to join any campaign against the figures of English history, which had been the scourges of his existences for so many years. Simply keeping track of all of them gave him a **headache**. **He** paused to light a Benson and Hedges and cleared some of the phlegm of English history from his **throat**. "They all made so many foolish mistakes. (Toole, p.243)

Here we see that Dr. Talc hates Rome and English history as a whole including the most famous samples. He describes them as a dull subject or phlegm from which his throat must be cleaned. All that occurs in contrast to Ignatius J. Reilly and M.Minkoff, both of who know more about English history than Dr.Talc.

On the other hand, George is portrayed as a boy who soon quits school to serve as a delivery boy for Lana Lee. George is ignorant and irresponsible. The similarity between Dr. Talc and George as ignorant individuals shows that education does not necessarily make people better or improve their moral standard. Both the education and the uneducated can be ignorant and can act irresponsibly.

By the same token, Ignatius is an educated man who can hardly make use of his education. He spends most of his time at home in bed or in front of television. He also hates everything **modern**. **A man** of this mentality and behavior would not be able to make use of his own education. He owns a Master's degree but he cannot make use of his education.

Indeed, Toole may be said to be making fun of useless education through his sarcastic and humorous portrayal of his educated character Ignatius who is presented as a misunderstood **genius**, a **situation** similar to that of Toole himself.

It is evident that Toole is a very educated writer and he intends to project his highly cultural mood in his protagonist **Ignatius**. **The** book makes reference to everything from medieval learning to modern American literature, to art and to **film**. **Each** page seems to

have a reference to some historical figure or other. We see that the book was not written by a dunce but by a highly educated man

George is a very innocent young boy. His bad economic circumstances lead him to deal with the worst nude woman in New Orleans. He must find fees in time and there is no other suitable opportunity for him to finish his education.

There are two kinds of obscenity in this novel. The first one occurs when Lana Lee, the tyrannical proprietor of the club (Night of Joy), has taken pornography photo for herself and asks George to be her messenger for orphans and student school, although George was just a lad.

On the another hand, we see that George has left his child school and turned to be a scandal-monger. He begins to give out these photos to children. He also makes himself as salesclerk asking his young costumers about their taste and anything new to feed their sexual appetites. We can see that as if it was the downfall of modern American modern society:

The boy a flashy hand-tooled wallet and gave Lana a number of bills.
 “Everything went okay, George “she asked him. “ The orphans liked them?
 “They liked the one on the desk with the glasses on. They thought it was some kind teacher or something. I want only that one this time “
 “You think they another like that? Lana asked with interest.
 “Yeah, why not? Maybe one with a blackboard and a book. You know. Doing something with a piece of chalk. The boy and Lana smiled at each other. I get the picture Lana said and winked. (Toole, p.75)

Here, education has triumphed over corruption. A better option for George is to be an educated young boy to move away from the decay in which American society has

indulged. Toole presents two contrasting states and leaves for the reader to select the best way money or **education.** **He** tries to say that both ways take opposite direction. The conflict is between the state of educated and unlettered man.

The destiny of Lana Lee was similar to the destiny of the other three lesbians, all end up in prison:

Get me outta here, Lana screamed through the bars “I just been through one fucking hell of a night with these three creeps. I got my rights. You can’t stick me in here

The matron smelted at her and walked **away.**

Hey! Lana screamed down the corridor. Come back here.”

“Take it easy dearie “friend advised.” out rocking the boat. Now come on and show us that picture of yourself you got hidden in your **bra.**

Yea liz saidGet out the snapshots, doll “Betty ordered.” **We're** tired of looking at these fringing walls ...The three girls lunged for Lana at the same time.(Toole ,p.346)

Another example of the **education** theme is Dr.Talc who is an ignorant man. Many people describe him as a big **failure.** **He** is renowned for his facile and sarcastic wit and easily digested generalizations that made him popular among the girl students and helped to conceal his lack of knowing about almost everything in general and British history in particular.

Here, Toole gives a vital example of how a doctor can lose his own mind and forget almost about the subject he teaches:

Your total ignorance of that which you profess to teach merits the death penalty. I doubt whether you would know that ST. Cassian of

Imola was stabbed to death by his student with their styli. His death, a martyr's honorable one, made him a Parton saint of teachers (Toole, p. 113)

Dr. Talc become the butt of the campus. There was much laughter and whispering that were disrupting his previously respectful classes. His education needed to be a creative one. He should not be dependent on classical and static knowledge but he must frequently renew his information.

Even Ignatius who was an educated man, loses his dignity when his over education makes him seem as an oaf, that no one in the modern American society is ready to think in the same manner:

One can find evidence for how such dialectical motion within a confederacy of Dunces operate by examining the examples of two minor character, a potential employee, Burma Jones, and a potential employer, Gus levy on the one hand, modern customer culture has alienated Burma Jones, instead of life, Burma is given life magazine, where he sees the product to be consumed in the good life. That culture has also alienated Gus: his wife encourage him to receive therapy so that he can enjoy the profit of his materialistic culture without moral qualms. To escape the confinement of his life. Gus longs to sell his father's factory. On the other hand Ignatius, that representative of Ficinian philosophy, also fails worker and owner in carnivalesque way. To the black workers he brings the threat of jail and to the factory owner he brings threat of bankruptcy. (Leighton2012)

Leighton gives examples on financial and material life in which the minor characters have taken place. The black man Jones who constantly longs to be a normal white man reads magazine, shaves his beard and has a tea every morning, away from policemen and tyrannical properties. Other minor character is Gus levy

consumed and confined in his good life away from morality. But at the end the black worker brings the threat of jail and the factory owner brings threat of bankruptcy.

The materialistic culture has led Ignatius to the same conclusion that American society is in need of a revolution which can bring it up and release it from the hollow **Capitalism.**

The book's protagonist, Ignatius J. Reilly, is simultaneously repulsive and yet utterly beloved, for those who possess the means to perceive the undertones and deft brushstrokes of tragicomedy in which Toole cloaked his hero. He is astute and yet inane. He is virtuous and yet insane. And that's just the beginning. All that is required to truly revel in this gem-of-a-book is a genuine possession and/or grasp of...wit! It thrills me that this offering continues, by its very nature and existence, to actively separate the geniuses from the "dunces" of the titular "confederacy."
(Jordan Jasper2008)

At the end, however, the role of education becomes clear. It leads to the creation of people like Toole and Ignatius who are greatly misunderstood. Like his characters, Toole was frustrated as a result of his rejection by publishers and educators and this perhaps led to his tragic suicide in the end as it did in the catastrophic ending of his hero.

4.1.4 Fate and free will

Another theme of obvious significance is fate or determinacy. This concept constitutes one of the basic questions raised in this novel. The question is whether one is guided by the power of destiny (or fate) or by his free will and freedom of choice. Fatalism or

determinacy is based on the idea that every individual is guided by natural or supernatural forces which are beyond human control. Thus, everything is predetermined and no one is really responsible for what happens. Freedom of choice on the other hand, makes people responsible for their own actions. It accepts the individual's right to self-expression and creativity. However, this freedom is guided by the individual's relation to society and his surroundings.

According to fatalism, it is ridiculous and futile to fight against the power of fate. Fatalism leaves no room for free expression or personal will.

In the novel, Ignatius speaks of his actions as being determined in advance and that he has no control over what happens to him.

We see that even when fortuna spins us downward, the wheel sometime halts for a moment and we find ourselves in a good, small cycle within the larger bad cycle. The universe, of course, is based upon the principle of the circle within the circle. **At the moment. I am in an inner circle.** Of course, smaller circles within this circle are also possible (Toole,p. 80)

Ignatius's worldview is based on the ideas of the medieval philosopher Boethius who conceived of the "Wheel of Fortune" as the driving force in the human life. Thus, Ignatius finds himself free of any responsibility for his sloth because it is already determined and has no choice to control it.

Contrary to Ignatius's view, the central theme of the novel regarding this point is the necessity of individual effort. It is comic and humorous to find Ignatius using this argument of determinism to justify his sloth and fundamental laziness.

I have taken to arriving at the office one hour later than I am expected. Therefore, I am far more rested and refreshed when I do arrive, and I avoid that bleak first hour of the working day during which my still sluggish senses and body make every chore a penance. I find that in arriving later, the work which I do perform is of such higher quality.
(Toole, p. 102)

Ignatius believes in the "**Wheel of fortune**" notion. He uses this concept to justify his laziness and his aversion to doing any work that is beneath his general status and it is only by a downward of the turn of the wheel of fortune that work or a job can be imposed on him.

Oh Fortuna, blind, heedless goddess, I am strapped to your wheel, Ignatius belched, do not crush me beneath your spokes. Raise me on high, divinity .
(Toole, p. 54)

Human practices and reactions are submitted to logical sequences reasons which deal with logical events, some events are brought by the power of nature as many **atheists believe** or by only God's will .

We see at the end of the novel that each character has deserving its own destiny and Toole's Fortuna wheel uses Ignatius as tool to make the finishing of novel's events. For example, Ignatius presents the show in night of Joy Club and fall in his suddenly confrontation with the parakeet which leads him to closely by bus accident at the same time Lana Lee a **nude** woman tries to seduce the Patrolman Mancuso who arrested her and finally succeeded in gaining respect from his angry manager, Ignatius's final suddenly accident also allows Jones to escape from slavery at the hand of his tyrannical prosperity and find real employment.

Both of Lana Lee and George have what they deserve. Their fate was expected. Lana Lee has been arrested by the patrolman Mancuso when she foolishly tries to seduce him, unaware that he was an officer. **On** the other hand, we see that George is afraid of being arrested. He thought that he will be able to escape from justice, but all dunces should go to hell.

The police? George heard his mother asking at the door. You must have wrong apartment

George started for the kitchen before he realized that there was nowhere to go . The apartment in the housing project had only one door. (Toole, p.357)

4.2 Technical view

4.2.1 The modern picaresque art

The Picaresque tradition is used as an art form in this novel and on a large scale. **This style of novel originated in 16th-century Spain and flourished throughout Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. It continues to influence modern literature. Seven qualities distinguish the picaresque novel or narrative form, all are employed for effect by the author, a picaresque narrative is usually written in first person as an autobiographical account, The main character is often of low character or social class, he or she gets by with wit and rarely deigns to hold a job, The story is told in a series of loosely connected adventures or episodes, there is little if any character development in the main character, once a picaro, always circumstances may change but they rarely result in a change of heart, the picaro's story is told with a plainness of language or realism. Satire might sometimes be a prominent element. And finally the behavior of a picaresque hero or**

heroine stops just short of criminality. Carefree or immoral rascality positions the picaresque hero as a sympathetic outsider, untouched by the false rules of society. The Picaro has continuously changed and appearance to suit the time and society needs.

Ignatius is an educated man, living in illusion and to him reality is constantly turned into fancy. He shows himself as magnificent, tries to make a mountain out of a molehill and considers all the other characters who surround him as enemies. For him they all have faults except himself. He is the one who has a solution to any problem. He is similar to Don Quixote in his boldness and uproar. He makes himself as a continuation of the medieval period. In fact Toole employs a picaresque tradition but in a modernized form that is developed and utilized by him as an essential component of his narrative technique.

The picaresque novel as a generic category originated in the Spanish sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It then spread all over Europe, exerting a particularly important influence towards the end of the seventeenth, and above all the eighteenth century in Germany, France and England. Given its status as one of the founding narrative discourses of modernity, it appears inextricably tied to the emergence of the novel: hence its importance when it comes to an assessment of the origins and evolution of certain varieties of European late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century prose fiction. (Fernandez, 2013)

When Ignatius begins his work at the Levy Pants Factory, he acts like a Don Quixote figure. He uses dirty blank sheets as a flag and gradually begins to reconstruct the old crucifix in his office and uses it as if he is fighting in a Crusader War of the Middle Ages. Finding the wages of the factory workers low, Ignatius begins to think that he must do something to save them

Ignatius shouts: friends! At the day is our I hope that you have all remembered to bring your engines of what I mean the sticks and chains and clubs and so forth.
(Toole , p . 124)

Ignatius views his revolutionary action and the demonstration which included the Levy Factory workers as a war against the enemy. His aim is to fight suppression and to make the voice of the worker heard. Of course, Ignatius's plans and demonstration come to nothing. A small number of workers join the demonstration and Ignatius is arrested and ultimately dismissed from his first job.

In his fanciful plan and action, Ignatius looks like a Don Quixote fighting an imaginary enemy such as the windmills or cattle. The enemies of course do not exist in reality. Obviously, there is an exaggeration in portraying the factory owners as an enemy against whom Ignatius should start a crusade or a religious war. Just like Don Quixote, Ignatius is accompanied by certain fanciful **adventures**. As **Don** Quixote was accompanied by Sancho **Pantha**, Ignatius is accompanied by his girlfriend Mariana Minkof .

Ignatius evoked the workers: My god! You have really assembled a rather formidable and diffuse armory. The violence of our attack may surpass my expectations. However, the more definitive the blow, the more definitive the results. My cursory inspection of your arms, therefore, confirms my faith in the ultimate success of our crusade today. In our wake we must leave a sacked and pillaged levy Pants, we must fight with fire. (Toole, p. 193)

This kind of talk is found in the picaresque character. Ignatius like the Picaro character has left the world of reality and has begun to sing a song

Halt” Ignatius screamed “someone help me off this table”
 Oh, Jesus, you be my friend
 Right, oh, yeah, right up till the end
 You take my hand
 And I feel grand
 Knowing you walking
 Hearing me talking
 I ain't complaining
 Though maybe it's raining
 When I'm with Jesus. (Toole, p. 134)

Unfortunately, the demonstration Ignatius leads has ended in total failure and the factory workers realize that Ignatius is no more than a big slob. Ignatius asks the workers to attack the office manager Mr. Gonzales as an imaginary enemy who resembles the enemies of Don Quixote. The main difference, however, is that Don Quixote carries out all his actions alone and without involving anyone else, while Ignatius involves other poor black workers in his destructive enterprise.

In Ignatius we see a conflict between idealism and realism. His illusion and fanciful idealism lead to his failure. Ignatius is responsible in front of Gus Levy for he has gone too far in his misdeeds and this leads him to lose his job.

Ignatius: Do you refuse to help these people?
 The office manager asked in a frightened voice: Help them?
 “What you are talking about Mr. Reilly?
 Ignatius “I am talking about the sin against society of which you are guilty”
 The manager “What?”
 Ignatius cried to the battalion (the black worker).
 "Attack!" This man is totally without charity”
 One of observed and discontented woman holding the sheet
 (Ignatius’s very dirty yellow sheet which it was used by him as a flag)
 She said: “you let Mr. . Gonzales Talk”
 Ignatius cried again even more furiously
 Attack! Attack! “Someone halfheartedly whizzed a bicycle chain over the
 top of the file cabinets and knocked the bean plants to the floor,

Ignatius said "Now look what you've done "" who told you to knock those plants over? (Toole, P230)

Ignatius has indulged himself in weird action, forgetting himself totally, while the other workers were wondering if he was aware of what he was doing:

The two women dropped the sheet disgustedly on the floor and felled the choir, which was already beginning to file through the door.

Ignatius cried, his voice choked with saliva and fury.

"The warriors" said nothing and began to follow the choir and the two standard bearers out of the office

Ignatius waddled swiftly behind the warriors straggling in the rear and grabbed one of them by the arm , but the man swatted at him as if he were a mosquito and said " we got enough trouble without getting throwed in jail "" come back in here ! We are not finished. You can get Miss Trixie if you want "Ignatius cried.

Frantically to the disappearing battalion, but the procession continued to move silently and determinedly farther down the stairs into the factory, finally the door swung closed on the last of the crusaders for Moorish dignity. (Toole, pp. 147 -148)

The first attack in a picaresque manner has ended with failure. Don Quixote's first attack on the mill of the good fortune had failed when he imagined himself as a knight when the time of knighthood was all over. Ignatius thinks of himself as a reformer but there is no room for reform and so his attempt ends **miserably**. But though Don Quixote was very **active**, Ignatius is very lazy. **Nevertheless**, Don Quixote sought glory while Ignatius seeks to build a Platonic ideal city .

On another level, Ignatius also shows signs of the picaresque tradition. For instance, he tries to use gender orientation as a means of social reform.

As I was wearing the soles of my desert boots down to a mere sliver of crepe rubber on the old flagstone banquettes of the French Quarter in my fevered attempt to wrest a living from an unthinking and uncaring society. I was

hailed by a cherished old acquaintance (deviate). After a few minutes of conversation in which I established most easily my moral superiority over this degenerate , I found myself pondering once more the crises of our time . My mentality , uncontrollable and wanton as always , whispered to me a scheme so magnificent and daring that I shrank from the very thought of what I was hearing ."Stop ! "I cried imploringly to my god – like mind " This is madness ." But still I listened to the counsel of my brain. It was offering me the opportunity to save the world through Degeneracy .(Toole,p.378)

Ignatius has another fanciful idea that is no less flamboyant than the one we have already discussed. It is weird to try to carry out social reform and homosexuals to infiltrate the armed forces so that there will be no war in this world and in this way save the United states and perhaps the world at large from the dangers of war :

Of course ' "Ignatius said in a thoughtful, serious voice ' this could be a worldwide deception the red sateen scarf rode up and down." the next war could to be one massive orgy Good grief . How many of military leader of the world may simply be deranged old sodomites acting out some fake fantasy role? Actually, this might be quite beneficial to the world; it could mean an end to war forever. This could be the key to lasting peace "It certainly could " the young man said pleasantly.' peace at any price " Two never ends in Ignatius's mind met and formed an immediate association. Perhaps he had found a means of assaulting the effrontery of M.Minkoff "The power – crazed leaders of the world would certainly be surprised to find that their military leaders and troops were only masquerading sodomites who were only too eager to meet the masquerading sodomite armies of other nation. in order to have dances and balls and learn some foreign dance steps
 "Would not that be wonderful? The government would pay us to travel. How divine. We bring an end to world strife and renew people hop and faith. (Toole, pp. 262-261)

Ignatius believes that if homosexuals infiltrate the armed forces, the army soldiers will become busy with cosmetic and makeup and consequently forget about wars and

bloodshed. Ignatius hopes that this practice will soon spread throughout the world and so the next “war “could be “Orgy” for Ignatius, and this could be the key to a lasting peace.

In his new picaresque adventure, Ignatius is showing his willingness to exploit others as a means to realize his own personal ends. As mentioned above, Ignatius is attempting to start a political movement made up entirely of homosexuals who can infiltrate the army and the government.

Ignatius uses flamboyant characters and lesbians to constitute his own political party hoping that those have the ability to lead the world toward permanent peace. As Donadieu explains:

In Toole’s early novels he made extensive use of the picaresque genre’s classic elements, particularly its biting satire and social commentary. These novels demonstrate the continuing relevance and creativity of the picaresque genre in postmodern literature. As he developed more as a novelist he moved away from the picaresque to focus on more serious and dramatic themes rather than satiric ones, although they are still present to some degree.

This shift shows a desire to apply his talent in different literary directions to take on new ideas while still critiquing the fragmented state of American culture. (Donadieu ,2000)

4.2.2 Narrative Technique in *A Confederacy of Dunces*

Toole employs various narrative techniques to write his masterpiece *A Confederacy of Dunces*. The novel is written in the third person omniscient narrator, a traditional narrative technique that enables the novelist to know much about his characters and their internal motives and thoughts. The writer depends on direct quotation of the characters’ minds, revealing their inner thoughts and feelings and in a largely humorous manner. Although the omniscient author tries to be objective, he allows the characters to narrate the events of

the story. This technique results in making them relate their stories in a subjective and highly personalized manner that makes them unreliable narrators.

One of the main narrative devices utilized in this novel is the epistolary form or the technique of using letters to develop the action. This is mainly used in the exchange of letters between Mariana Minkoff and Ignatius J Reilly. Toole uses letters to characterize her and develop her relationship with Ignatius, a relation that goes back to their school days.

What is this strange, frightening letter that you had written to **me**, **Ignatius**? How can I contact the civil liberties Union with the little evidence that you have given me? I can't imagine why a policeman would try to arrest **you**. You stay in your room all the time. I might have believed the arrest if you hadn't written about that "automobile accident." If both of your wrists were broken, how could you write me a letter? [...] Subconsciously you feel that you must attempt to explain away your failure, as an intellectual and soldier of ideas, to actively participate in critical social movement. Also, a satisfying sexual encounter would purify your mind and body. You need the therapy of sex desperately. I'm afraid – from what I know about clinical cases like yours – that you may end up a psychosomatic invalid like Elizabeth B. Browning. (Toole, p. 83)

Here, Toole presents Ignatius's ex-girlfriend Maryana Mynkoff. Ignatius spent all the time in polemic with her to approve his point of view about his intellectual and soldier ideas that she was denied. Mariana believes by sexual catharsis to purify the human soul and advice Ignatius to have therapy of sex desperately in order to release from his paranoid illness. All these conversations have taken place in the novel by using epistle style.

Another narrative technique employed by Toole is humor and the closely related literary devices irony and satire. As mentioned earlier, Jonathan Swift and his satirical style of writing formed the main source of inspiration for writing this novel. It is no surprise, then, that Toole is relying upon a basic technique employed by Swift, namely humor and the irony and satire.

It is reasonable to argue that Toole has used such narrative device, first to draw attention to his work by making the reader laugh at the comic situation resulting from the use of these devices, and second to make the reader have some sympathy for the characters. Through irony, humor, and satire, Toole is able to underscore many negative aspects of modern American society and the world at large. Like his predecessor Swift, Toole is directing his satire against the social ills as well as the tyrannical political systems that characterize human life in all periods. His main target is American life but his criticism can be applied to many other societies and communities around the world.

Since its first appearance in 1980, *A Confederacy of Dunces* has been hailed as one of the funniest novels ever written. Making ample use of the picaresque narrative technique, the novel traces the adventures and the misadventures of its Picaro and protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly, who is a highly educated but lazy fat fellow.

As a novel that makes use of the picaresque narrative technique, *A Confederacy of Dunces* involves its principal character in a series of adventures that eventually render the structure of the novel episodic. Ignatius is thus involved in various jobs including a hotdog vender. He is also involved in various activities such as university protests, factory owners, pornographers, homosexuals and many others. The final result of this technique

is a comic novel that is full of funny and humorous scenes and a work of literature that is highly episodic in its structured design and narrative framework.

Ignatius stepped into the garage and looked around. In a corner an old man was boiling hot dogs in a large institution pot whose size dwarfed the gas rang upon which it rested

Pardon me, sir, Ignatius called “Do you retail here?”

The man’s watering eyes turned toward the large visitor “what do you want”

I would like to buy of your hot dogs, the smell rather tasty [...] In the boiling water the frankfurters swished and lashed like arterially colored and magnified paramecia. (Toole,p. 125)

This dialogue shows the deference between the over-educated Ignatius who was controlled by his gluttony to eat as much as possible to full his wide stomach and the illiterate man Claudius who has paradise vendor company to sale hot dog. As Picaro Ignatius uses highly educated words to show himself as an important man to seduce the owner to eat all his goods without money.

Despite its episodic structure, the novel as a whole is well connected and every episode contributes to the final outcome, leaving no loose ends. One of the comic incidents occurs when Ignatius misses an appointment as a university lecturer because he arrived very late for the interview and without a necktie. **Additionally**, the general appearance of the protagonist is used as a means to create an atmosphere of fun and humor. He eats, speaks and acts as a catalyst for all the comic episodes and the chaotic action in the novel. Ignatius is revealed as an avid and gluttons eater who is always hungry and ready to eat. In his conversation with the hot dogs vendor, Ignatius sounds very humorous especially when he tries to show his high education in front of a simple and old man, Mr. Claudius. This dialogue employed by the writer adds a comic flavor and together with the picaresque

element characteristic creates a sense of comedy and fun that enlivens the whole novel. Ignatius eats all hotdogs of Mr. Claudius and, but he doesn't have any money to pay for, and this leads the old man to ask Ignatius to be his employee for few days or to call the police. This is a humiliating job for an educated man like Ignatius.

Just for little while, the old man begged. I try it for a day . How's about it ? I need vendors bad.

A day ? Ignatius repeated disbelievingly. A day? I can't waste a valuable day . I have places to go people to see (picaresque)

Okay the old man said firmly.” Then pay me the dollar you owe for them weenies

I am a afraid that they will all have to be on the house. or on the garage or whatever it is my Miss Marple of a mother discovered a number of theater ticket stubs in my pockets last night and lies given me only carfare today. I'll call in the police.

Oh ,my God . pay me !pay me or I will get the law (The old man picked up the long fork and deftly placed its two rotting at Ignatius's throat. You are puncturing my imported muffler , Ignatius screamed Gimme your carfare (Toole , p. 161)

Ironically, the club where Ignatius meets most of this trouble is called “Night of Joy” The ironic touch reminds us of Swift's narrative technique, particularly in his satirical and humorous masterpiece *Gulliver's Travels*. Another Irony occurs when Ignatius goes to Night of Joy Club wearing his strange costume of a pirate uniform. Though, he is first seeking enjoyment and having fun and a good time, he finally finds something different. The show supposedly presents one of the famous actresses (Harlet O Hara).Scarlett O'Hara is the central character in Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel *Gone with the Wind* and in the later film of the same name .However, he found that everything was falsehood:

Oh, my God "Ignatius bellowed, unable to remain silent any longer. "Is this cretin Harlett O Hara?' the cockatoo (parakeet) noticed him before Darlene did, for its beads of eyes had been focusing on Ignatius's hoop of a novelty earring ever since had come onstage. When Ignatius bellowed it flapped from Darlene's arm to the stage and squawking, hopping, dashed for Ignatius's head (the parakeet was trained to help Darlene in her show of nudity by putting out her clothes which were decorated by hoop) . "Hay, Darlene cried. " It's the crazy man"

As Ignatius was about to dash from the club, the bird hopped from the stage to his shoulder. It sank its claws into his smock and snagged his earring with its beak. "God heaven " Ignatius leaped up and beat at the bird with his itching paws. What avian menace had depraved fortune spun his way? The champagne bottle and the glasses shattered on the floor as he sprang staggering to the door.

"Come back here with my cockatoo" Darlene cried. (Toole , p. 342)

Another narrative technique employed in the writing of this novel is Toole's characteristic use of the language. In this novel, the author uses effectively the language of the local people of New Orleans with their distractive dialects. The novel also makes use of allusion or what may be called intertextuality. Here Ignatius uses some expressions from some famous cultural characters to shed light on what he will be talking about.

A great writer is the friend and benefactor of his reader .Macaulay (Toole ,p. 121)

Book are immortal sons defying their sires . Plato (.Toole, p .103)
Especially when one sees les Africans moving about attending to their tasks in this mechanized setting. The Irony involved caught my fancy, I must admit. Something from Joseph Conrad sprang to my mind, although I can't seem to remember what it was at the time. Perhaps I liked myself to Kurtz in

the *Heart of Darkness* when far from trading company office in Europe; he was faced with the ultimate horror (Toole, p. 124)

In its treatment of time, the novel centers on a period of several weeks in the life of the protagonist Ignatius. The novel is also largely autobiographical. The writer is using own biography. Therefore, autobiography is used as one of the driving structural devices in the novel.

Toole's portrait of Ignatius is autobiographical, the character is unforgettable; he moves through New Orleans leaving confusion in his broad and magnificent wake. Until his mother damages a French Quarter building by running their ancient Plymouth against it, Ignatius has lived the life of a secular monk, withdrawing from society in order to lament its lack of a proper "theology and geometry" and to catalog its "offenses against taste and decency."

Despite its being a work full of comic incidents, *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a serious work that uses humor and satire to poke fun at some absurdities of life. It is a work with a serious message and serious themes. Actually it has been praised for its comic structure.

The picaresque traditionally function as a highly entertaining form of social satire as the protagonist struggle to survive in various geographical locations and social strata. **He** exposes a wide range of social failings and individual character flaws. **Some** scholars have also proposed that picaresque novels are produced in abundance during times of social change or crisis and that they depict the lives of those with repressed , disturbed or lost identities. (Twark, 1990}

Another narrative technique used by Toole is alliteration. Many character's names in *A Confederacy of Dunces* have the first and the last name begin with the same sound, and this

can also include the middle name, This way enable the writer to supply the reader with interesting and catchy names, which in turn makes the character more memorable to the audience. We can see that in the name of Myrna Minkoff, and Lana Lee. Where the initial letters of their names are the same that is “M” for the first pain and “L” for the second one.

Toole’s special and effective use of language helped in the structuring of this novel. Many phrases and ways of expression are continually repeated throughout the novel. There is also an obvious exaggeration of each character’s traits and idiosyncrasies. This technique results in a long – drawn and wordy text. There is much talk about this subject in the novel itself.

Chapter five

5.0. Conclusion, Recommendations and Further Studies

In this chapter the researcher sheds light on the final conclusions of this study and provides the most important recommendations and the further researches which can be considered for future studies.

5.1 Conclusion

It has become evident by now that John Kennedy Toole's novel

A Confederacy of Dunces is related to one of the oldest traditions which emerged in 16th century Spain, namely the picaresque tradition. This type of fiction has adopted the elements of comedy and satire as a means of drawing attention to the work itself besides underscoring the elements that it deals with and the technical and stylistic devices it has utilized. Toole has employed this genre to focus on the American society's faults so as to criticize the bad behaviors that have taken place inside the American society and destroyed the meaning of some American values related to family, morals, dream and spiritual values.

The researcher has shown how Toole is drawing on a medieval tradition of Knighthood even though he was writing his novel in the second half of the 20th century. Another important point is that this novel is concerned with the basic social and moral problems which characterize modern American society. These problems include the issue of race identity, exploitation, the failure of the American dream and the deteriorating moral and spiritual values.

It is also noticeable that the writer draws upon his own life and his personal experiences in picturing his protagonist. Both of the real life author and his fictional character face similar problems of recognition, identity and social rejection and both have their plans to reform society. Ultimately, both of them fail to achieve recognition despite their potential intellectual, imaginative faculties and capabilities.

The thesis has also demonstrated the close connection between themes and techniques. In this novel in particular we notice how the writer utilizes technique to highlight the social and moral problems by using such techniques as the picaresque tradition, humor, satire, irony the vernacular language and intertextuality. All these technique and themes are closely interlinked to make a complete literary composition despite its seemingly fragmented and episodic nature.

Additionally, Toole makes his novel part of long literary tradition that has been used effectively since the 16th century and early 17th centuries and has continued to be used in several important literary works. Such traditions include not only the picaresque literary genre but also irony, the epistolary novel and literary allusion. All these narrative devices and literary techniques have been utilized in writing this novel perhaps to make a close connection between the past and the present and to draw attention to the work as well as to the author himself.

With regard to the theme, it seems that for Toole, the American dream is not valid any more. He mocks the American dream throughout the book, most noticeably through the use of minor characters Irene Reilly (Ignatius's mother), Jones (the black man with space glasses, and Darlene (the chorus girl). All try desperately to meet their monetary desires,

but can never get a firm grip on **them**. Their comments and ideologies echo the societal dream or nation that materialism and selfishness are the key to happiness. In stark contrast, Mr. Levy is the example of the financially successful man, yet he is miserable and depressed due to his money and his trouble with his greedy wife, and unruly daughters.

For Toole, **Education** does not make a big difference in human behavior. This is clearly reflected in the presentation of the two contrasting characters

George and Dr. Talc. *A Confederacy of Dunces* is meant to be a smart book in that it makes reference to many things from medieval learning to modern American literature to films. The reader barely turns a page without finding a reference to some obscure historical figure or other. But while the book displays a lot of learning, it doesn't seem to respect it much. The professor in the book, Dr. Talc, is ignoramus; he does not like the American historical curriculum and the writer uses the character's education for the sole purpose of insulting him. Myrna uses hers for similar purpose. *A Confederacy of Dunces* focuses on education and learning and provides examples of how the characters of the story show the reader that educated people are not always the ones who fare the best in terms of their emotional well-being and their ability to function in society. Neither George nor Dr. Talc would become happier whether they were educated or not. This underscores the idea of colleges and universities in the United State being more concerned with financial aspects than with their students, as well as the idea of students using higher education not to become more educated individuals but to increase their chances of earning higher wages after colleges or graduate schools.

For Toole, the old retrograde tradition and racial problems still persist in modern American life and society. In *A Confederacy of Dunces* the black workers cannot find a job, but if they find one, it will be usually low – paid job. *A Confederacy of Dunces* is set in the 1960s in the South, at a period and in a place where the Civil Rights movement was very visible, but had by no means ended discrimination against black people. The book also frequently ridicules the racism of white people and is clearly on the side of Burma Jones when he takes his revenge on Lana for exploiting him. Toole deals with minority culture and minority rights. Jones is always comparing the economic plight of blacks to the days of slavery. The situation of Levy's Pants Factory where Jones and other blacks work is similar to the old Cotton farms where blacks worked as a slaves for their white masters.

We may safely conclude from our discussion that from Toole's perspective, fate and free will depend on the idea that all characters more or less receive what they deserve. The writer shows interest in the goddess Fortuna. If a person is lucky, he may be successful. His success will be due to Fortuna, not to hard work, initiative or creativity. All characters face their deserved destiny at the end of the novel where the bad people (Lana Lee, Three Lesbians, George) go to the jail and the good people Mr. Levy, Burma Jones, Darlene) are able to change their life for the better.

For Toole, wealth and class make a huge difference in how people in different parts of the class ladder live their lives. Mr. Levy has problems, certainly, but his life of jetting to sporting events is a lot more comfortable

than Burma Jones's. Still, wherever they are on the class ladder, the characters are united in worrying and being worried by money. Even Ignatius, who claims elaborately not to be part of the modern rat race, spends the entire book trying to find some way to get money, or to hide money from his mother.

With regard to technique, we have seen how Toole uses multiple devices to develop and express his different objective ideas and subjective themes. This enables the reader to become more involved in the events and to keep him away from feeling bored or uninterested.

Toole uses the Picaresque art to present his book which is a first –person narrative relating the adventures of a rogue or lowborn adventurer.

(Spanish Picaro) as he drifts from place to place and from one social milieu to another in his effort to **survive**. Toole presents his rogue Ignatius as a modern Picaro who is struggling against the dunces. He is an over educated **man**. His social milieu is very special for he lives in the neglected world of medieval period, out of the materialist modern world.

In its episodic structure the picaresque novel resembles the long, rambling romances of medieval chivalry, to which it provided perhaps the first realistic counterpart. Unlike the idealistic knight – errant hero, however, the Picaro is a cynical and amoral rascal who, if given half a chance, would rather live by his wits than by honorable work.

Toole uses **satire** and mixes it with **humor**. Satire is used **to** attack the practices of society through **ridicule, exaggeration, irony**, burlesque and **humor**. Human nature is exposed in its worst follies and illusion Toole seems familiar with the work of other famous **satirists**, such

as Charles Dickens, Laurence Sterne, Jonathan Swift, and Mark Twain, whom he mentions or imitates their techniques. He recalls Swifts “A Modest Proposal” that proposes the selling of the poor Irish children to feed rich Englishmen and to reduce the population numbers. Ignatius uses a similar logic when Jones proposes that black people should be content with poverty so they do not have ulcers worrying about their money. The title of the book also comes from Swift’s “*Through on Various Subjects, Moral and Diverting.*(1706) “When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him”. For Toole, satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own, characters do not see their faults but they only see the faults of others which is the chief reason for the fact some of people are not accepted in society just like Ignatius. Toole makes us laugh at human behavior in a generous manner, without venom, in the humanist tradition with the hope of stimulating reflection and self – Knowledge .

The novel uses a third person omniscient narrative method, thus the narrator has an intimate knowledge not only of the events that take place but also of the inner working of the character’s minds. Though the novel deals with cartoonish figures, the narration is more likely to relate any given character’s thoughts in a direct, humorous manner that refrains from overt judgment. The narrator sums up Ignatius’s philosophy succinctly: "Possession of anything new or expensive only reflected a person’s lack of theology and geometry; it could even cast doubts upon one’s soul"(p.55) In this manner, Toole conveys the extremity of Ignatius’ views without compromising the objectivity of the narrator.

Metaphorical language is another **technique** used by Toole especially when Ignatius refers to the wheel of the goddess Fortune constantly whenever things are going up or down for him. Boethius said that human life was ruled by Fortune or Fate rather than human effort. Ignatius is described almost solely in animal images, as a child. His huge, fat body is likened to an elephant or a **"pink hippo"** in the bathtub (Toole, p. 206). The image of the city is important in the book particularly. New Orleans Society is best shown in cross – section in a city, and **Toole's** hometown is described in its various neighborhoods, from Canal Street, and Bourbon Street to the lower – class Catholic to, The French Quarter with its tourists and **prostitutes**, the bars on the river, the hot-dog **vendors**, the movies **houses**, the Charity **hospital**, and above all the carnival atmosphere of Mardi **Gras**. Even Myrna calls New Orleans “that decaying city” (Toole, p. 356), just like James **Joyce** when he calls Dublin “Dear dirty city”.

Toole uses alliteration as a part of his technique in this novel. Another narrative technique is intertextuality which is the shaping of a text’s meaning by another text’s intertextual figures. It is a literary device that creates an interrelationship between texts and generates related understanding in separate works. This device is drawn upon on a large scale. This is clear in the frequent references to various literary and historical works and figure such as Addison, Plato, Swift’s essay and others.

We have seen how the protagonist stumbles from one adventure to the next. His stint as a hotdog vendor is less than successful, and he soon turns his employers at the Levy Pant Company on their heads. Ignatius’ path through the working world is populated by marvelous secondary characters: the stripper Lana Lee and her talented **cockatoo**, the

septuagenarian secretary Miss **Trixie**, whose desperate attempts to retire are **constantly**, comically thwarted ; gay blade Dorian **Greene**: sinister Miss Lee , proprietor of the Night of Joy nightclub : and Myrna Minkoff , the girl Ignatius loves to **hate**. The many subplots that weave through *A Confederacy of Dunces* are as complicated as anything we find in a Dickens' **novel**, and just as beautifully tied together in the **end**.

Even though *A Confederacy of Dunces'* has been translated into 35 languages, but its language is characterized by vernacular and local. Though the language of the novel is generally easy, some words are written in the **vernacular**. Nevertheless; we can identify the content and understand the main idea of the text.

5.2. Recommendations

1. Toole's novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a literary work that should be taken more seriously than has been done until now
2. *A Confederacy of Dunces* should be read and interpreted with reference to some established traditions in English and American literature both thematically and technically.
3. There is need for more research on this novel with special focus on the various literary and historical sources that are implicitly or explicitly referred to in the text.

5.3. Further studies

For further studies the researcher suggests the following:

1. *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a resourceful book which contains reference to many famous and popular **figures**. There are references to many famous actors and others who

represent well known literary or historical figures. Every one of these can be used by any student to research this novel.

2. Furthermore, there is need for doing more research on the life of the author himself. Such research can be helpful in learning more historical and authentic details about this writer. The finding of such research can be used in interpreting the novel for there is close connection between the novel and the life of the writer in this largely autobiographical work.

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