

**THE 'I' - A PLURALITY OF ALL SUBJECTS AS WITNESSED
IN A *CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES***

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ABSTRACT

Meet the 'Every man' in Ignatius Reilly of Southern United States. Eccentric, idealistic and unhinged in the eyes of the world, he opines his thoughts often prophesying like Cassandra. Frequent predictions emerge paying homage to his pyloric valve signifying an insubstantial emptiness even before his words reach the realm of common parlance. He celebrates unemployment succumbing now and then to his mother's pleas to find himself a steady job. This desire thrust on him escalates into a set of lunatic adventures, yet each having its own eerie logic that only Don Quixote can empathize with. He contains the sacred and the profane expressing his disdain for popular culture through scatological humor. He disdains modernity which becomes an obsession and he makes painstaking efforts to mock their perversity and express his outrage with the contemporary world's lack of theology and geometry. He prefers the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages, and the Early Medieval philosopher Boethius in particular. It is a picaresque novel of epic proportions narrating the tale of an irritable Oliver Hardy, a perverse Thomas Aquinas and a vainglorious Falstaff, all rolled into one. The mental transference and physical transit of 'I' enunciate a dialogue between the world of ideas, as perceived and the world as it is. However, the 'as it is' state of this world has many versions of reality as expressed throughout the novel. The novel is a revelation that judges not the different realities, but asserts each, adumbrating the similarities and differences between the private self and the public persona. Many binaries like the living and the dead (both physical and metaphorical); sanity and insanity; creative freedom and expurgation; genuine and ersatz are dexterously weighed by a subjective moral scale suspended in a world of unstable ethical tectonics. This paper aims at understanding the cognitive processes of an individual struggling to break away from a collective unconscious by traversing beyond fallacious moral boundaries paddling with the help of the carnivalesque and the burlesque.

KEYWORDS: Private Self, Public Person, Carnavalesque, Burlesque