

## Research Article

David E. S. Beek\*

# Faulkner's Quixotic Picaresque: Carnival, Tricksters, and Rhizomatic Intertextuality in *The Reivers*

<https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2017-0024>

Received July 7, 2017; accepted October 29, 2017

**Abstract:** Faulkner's *The Reivers* exemplifies the Quixotic Picaresque—a conflation of the narrative modes exhibited in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. This essay explores the correlation between Spain's transition from feudalism to a modern mercantile society and the United States' transition from an agrarian society based on slavery to a modern industrial nation within the cultural contexts of these novels. In each of these works, a series of trickster figures undertake performative acts of deception, particularly the masking tradition of Carnival, in order to endure the hardships of modernity. However, whereas most tricksters tend to be solely focused on pragmatic individual objectives, quixotic *pícaros* maintain a sense of idealism that leads them to consider the Other and thus act in the name of communal prosperity. These selfless tricksters meta-theatrically parody the generic social conventions in which they reside in order to subvert the hegemony that seeks to oppress and marginalise them and fellow members of their communities. In performing an array of identities and social roles, these quixotic *pícaros* contribute to the opacity of modern multicultural nation-states, and thus, disrupt all social hierarchies leading to the regeneration of the public body, mobility, and a more utopian world.

**Keywords:** Masking, Otherness, Modernity, Dialogism, Signifyin(g)

The world is a “rhizome,” an enmeshed root system inevitably entangled in all its totality. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of “the rhizome,” in which they observe a Western tendency to create hierarchies via tree-like patterns of thought, illuminates the phenomenon of intertextuality as it “connects any point to any other point . . . [for] the rhizome is an antigenealogy. It . . . operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots” (21). In World Literature, texts, both written and oral, enter into a boundless dialogue. Some texts participate in this grand polyphony more overtly than others; nonetheless, all are indeed one infinitesimal part of a larger whole. Although they blur the lines of influence and confluence, the anonymously written *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and William Faulkner's *The Reivers* are all linked with one another—bridging different times and spaces—yet, reverberating as a “plateau,” that is, “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities” (a groundswell), in the rhizome of intertextuality (Deleuze and Guattari 22). This multiplicitous literary convergence, which I refer to as the Quixotic Picaresque, elucidates the tensions between the marginalised individual, community, and the modern state. This study will unearth the Quixotic Picaresque via various reincarnations of folkloric trickster narratives in the modern novel.

Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* is a seminal and undying work of World Literature. Despite Quixote's starry-eyed madness, Cervantes's novel is an early example of literary realism. Contemporaneity and the quotidian are at the heart of the work, and yet Quixote's idealized worldview

---

\*Corresponding author: David E. S. Beek, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, 29208, USA, E-mail: dbeek@email.sc.edu

resonates with anyone who has longed for utopia—progress. Nevertheless, not everyone is able to relate to the knight-errant's exceeding idealism, particularly those without the slightest social advantage. Although Quixote aspires for class ascension, he begins as a *hidalgo*, the lowest rung of early modern Spanish nobility. Conversely, Sancho Panza is a peasant in an unforgiving feudal society. Thus, Sancho is not in any position to have the lofty dreams of his counterpart; rather, he is a pragmatist and an opportunist who relies on his commonsense philosophy to endure modernity. Though Sancho joins Quixote's adventures in hopes of being rewarded with an insular governorship, his reasons for accepting have little to do with social prestige; rather, Sancho simply wishes to provide for his family. Whereas Quixote undertakes his adventure in the name of past ideals, Sancho's vision is much more pragmatic, as he only longs to bring about communal prosperity.

While Sancho is not exactly a *pícaro*, his hermeneutics—his pragmatic and opportunistic perspective—is more aligned with the protagonists of picaresque narratives than the exceeding idealism of Quixote. *Pícaros* have not been allotted many fortunes in life; instead, they are the marginalised, the oppressed, and the forgotten. However, in consideration of their social stratum, it is no surprise that these characters resort to thievery, deception, trickery, and other morally relative acts along with their sharp wits in order to survive the harsh modern world and hegemonic oppression. Correlatively, like Sancho, *pícaros* are pragmatic and opportunistic in their way of life. They take advantage of others in order to ensure their own survival. The *pícaro* endures the hardships of his or her predicament through social perspicacity. He or she practices moral relativism, always acting in accordance with the demands of a particular situation. The *pícaro* navigates the modern world by relying on his or her wits, often performing his or her identity in a chameleonic or protean fashion. Primarily, the picaresque mode aims at asserting the narrator's individuality in a modern society that condemns such persons to the margins. This is especially true for the first picaresque, the anonymously written *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Lazarillo's aspirations for social mobility are couched in his spatial mobility, as he leaves his destitute origins in his native Salamanca behind in search of a better life elsewhere, ultimately ending up as the town-crier of Toledo where he achieves his individuality while also acting selflessly in the communal interest of his family, and thus evades subjugation in early modern Spain's feudal society.

Though there exist many important distinctions between *Lazarillo* and *Don Quixote*, both share the goal of combating the hegemony by subverting the prevailing socioideology of their contemporaneous moment, thereby disrupting the classist society of early modern Spain. The two works alike are episodic in their construction and take place along the roads, in the inns, and within, as well as on the fringes of, various Spanish cities. Due to these similarities, the disparate narrative modes—first- and third-person respectively—are often obfuscated. As Walter L. Reed asserts, “these two earliest manifestations of the European novel have sometimes been conflated with one another by later novelists and have even been confused with one another by modern critics” (71). Indeed, outside of Hispanic literary studies, *Don Quixote* has a tendency to be erroneously dubbed a picaresque novel. While the novel does contain picaresque elements, it is multivalent, as Cervantes weaves in various other literary forms—sonnets, pastorals, picaresque tales, folklore, etc.—into the whole of his text. Nevertheless, while unscrupulous critics have inaccurately conflated the two novelistic modes, successive novelists have creatively fused them with myriad other texts from the written and oral traditions of the world thereby engendering the Quixotic Picaresque.

It is precisely this conflation of the two aforementioned modes, the Quixotic Picaresque, which is to be developed in this essay. The confluence of *Don Quixote* and *Lazarillo* transcends national cultures, surfacing in much canonical European fiction; yet, I am particularly interested in American incarnations of the Quixotic Picaresque. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is perhaps the most renowned reiteration of this conflated narrative mode. Faulkner, like Twain, writes in the vein of American folklore and humour, and although the majority of his work may seem more morbid than funny, his final novel *The Reivers* is indubitably comic. Faulkner famously expressed his reverence for *Don Quixote*, claiming that he read Cervantes's novel “every year, as some do the bible,” recalling that he would read “one scene . . . just as [one would] meet and talk to a friend for a few minutes” (Jean Stein). Montserrat Ginés has written an in-depth study on the confluence of Cervantine thought with American fiction entitled *The Southern Inheritors of Don Quixote*. However, Ginés virtually ignores *The Reivers* and instead predominantly sets her sights on Faulkner's more acclaimed earlier novels. There is a real reluctance in literary criticism to delve

into Faulkner's late work and this is especially true for "The Golden Book of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County in Mississippi." Despite critics' overwhelming dismissal of *The Reivers*, it, too, resonates as one contrapuntal voice in the intertextual dialogue of the Quixotic Picaresque, and I aim to illustrate that Faulkner critiques the Golden Age of Yoknapatawpha much in the same way that Cervantes debunks the Age of Gold, through relentless parody.

Social and spatial mobility is central to *The Reivers*. In line with the picaresque mode, Faulkner's novel is presented from a first-person point of view. *The Reivers* is subtitled, "A Reminiscence" as it is a retrospective tale told from grandfather to grandson. Circa 1960, in old age Lucius looks back on his youth with nostalgia as he relates the oral history of the formative episodes of his childhood. Nonetheless, Lucius is highly conscious of the social changes that have transpired since he was eleven, and though he seeks to teach his grandson about the inner workings of life, he is aware that his wisdom may be more applicable to the past. As a grandfather, Lucius recognizes the irreconcilability of his worldview with the impending future and in this way hearkens back to Quixote's chivalric ideals. Accordingly, Faulkner's novel is prophetic, as it seems to envisage the eventual progress imminent in the social and cultural revolutions of the 1960's. Thus, he is aware that the aristocratic ways of the Old South with which he is partially indoctrinated will be futile and outdated in future multicultural American society. In his interactions with Ned McCaslin and Boon Hogganbeck, two marginalized mixed-race characters of Yoknapatawpha, Lucius learns a way of life quite different from that handed down to him by his grandfather. While Boss Priest imparts the idealism of the Old South in Lucius' fecund mind, Ned and Boon teach him the way of the trickster. Concomitantly, Lucius embodies the quixotic *pícaro*, as he holds onto his idealism but undertakes communally minded acts of trickery as well. Lucius' advice to his own grandson is that moral relativism and social adaptability, not the chivalrous ways of the old order, are key to prevailing in modern multiethnic America.

Lucius' narrative contains multiple voices; correlatively, Mikhail Bakhtin conceives of language, and furthermore the very nature of life, to be "dialogical." In "dialogism" all language "is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (*Dialogic* 426). Bakhtin perceives the world as polyphonic, believing that any particular utterance is in dialogue with all language and signification across time and space. In other words, one is constantly conversing with the "heteroglossia," that is the matrix of "conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (*Dialogic* 428). Accordingly, *Lazarillo*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Reivers* are all polyphonic novels, and "novelness" is central to dialogism. As Bakhtin writes, "the novel parodies other genres...it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language" (*Dialogic* 5). Therefore, parody is crucial to Bakhtinian thought because it brings the mechanisms of a particular genre to light, that is to say, the way in which a genre functions is revealed by its parody's Otherness. Concomitantly, Bakhtin's dialogism is a precursor to the later concept of intertextuality. For Bakhtin, then, the novel, like Carnival, is a means of recognizing Otherness.

*Don Quixote* clearly engages in intertextuality, as parody is critical to Cervantes's literary objective. Furthermore, Cervantes draws on the folkloric tradition of Carnival extensively. While Faulkner does not explicitly state his intertextual relations with *Don Quixote*, *The Reivers* does dialogue with its predecessors. Moreover, Faulkner also works in the folkloric tradition of the American Old South(west) as well as Carnival. Accordingly, these novels resonate with one another across the spatiotemporal field of World Literature. Yet, despite its canonical status, much of Faulkner's work, like *Huckleberry Finn*, has been at the centre of controversy. Many critics believe that Twain and Faulkner alike portray blacks in the abhorrent American tradition of minstrelsy. Contrarily, I seek to investigate Faulkner's characterisation of blacks in consideration of the confluence of the *pícaro* and the African-American trickster figure. While Faulkner's intertextual connections to Carnival and the Spanish literary tradition may be more readily apparent, *The Reivers* also dialogues with the African-American trickster and folkloric tradition of what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. calls "Signifyin(g)," thus enmeshing further rhizomatic counterpoints in the Quixotic Picaresque.

Gates asserts that literature derivative of "the Signifying Monkey" tradition, is intrinsically intertextual. Signifyin(g) is an oral and written form of parody in the African-American literary tradition; those who Signify mock other people and texts via polysemic language ripe with a range of significations. Gates

summarises Signifyin(g) as such, “the figurative difference between the literal and the metaphorical, between surface and latent meaning . . . Signifyin(g) presupposes an ‘encoded’ intention to say one thing but to mean quite another” (89). Bakhtin’s “parodic stylization,” which occurs when “the intentions of the representing discourse are at odds with the intentions of the represented discourse,” (*Dialogic* 364) parallels this concept. In fact, Gates draws heavily on Bakhtin’s notion of “double-voiced” language in the development of his theory. As Gates suggests, “Signifyin(g) . . . is fundamentally related to Bakhtin’s definitions of parody and hidden polemic” (120). And as he extrapolates further, “when one text signifies upon another text...the double-voiced utterance allows us to chart discrete formal relationships in Afro-American literary history. Signifyin(g), then, is a metaphor for textual revision” (Gates 96). More concisely put, parody—the essential intertextual feature of *Don Quixote*—is also at the crux of Signifyin(g).

The African-American trickster figure and the *pícaro* bear striking similarities, as both draw on their respective popular cultures and folkloric traditions. The Signifying Monkey and comparable figures of African mythology are tricksters that have shaped the written and oral African-American tradition. I aim to argue that Signifyin(g) tricksters are indeed confluent with the Euro-American picaresque. Accordingly, Lazarillo is a trickster just as Ned is a *pícaro* and vice versa. Furthermore, Quixote and Sancho both embody the trickster figure in some episodes, therefore sharing characteristics of the *pícaro*. In regards to the carnivalesque world in *Don Quixote*, especially metatheatrical parody and the regenerative nature of the grotesque “bodily lower stratum,” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 22) the trickster is without a doubt congruent. As Harold Scheub affirms, “the trickster’s world has as constants destruction and re-creation; hence, the emphasis on the phallus, the emphasis on deception, disguise, and illusion . . . Consider also his theatrical nature, and the nature of the performance that frames his antics ultimately” (31-2). Performance is quintessential to *Don Quixote*. Moreover, taking into account Bakhtin’s profession that via “degradation,” “the fundamental trend of Cervantes’s parodies is a ‘coming down to earth,’ a contact with the reproductive and generating power of the other and of the body” (*Rabelais* 22), Scheub’s portrait of the trickster is strikingly redolent.

In his famous essay, “Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke,” Ralph Ellison explores the folkloric roots of the African-American trickster and blackface minstrelsy in the American novel, proposing that the “joke at the center of American identity” is the masked joker, a disguise, whose core figure is the “smart man playing dumb” (54). However, Ellison finds this motif problematic, believing that the racist tradition of minstrelsy, particularly the abject depiction of African-Americans via blackface mask, stems from it. Ellison perceives an inherent “danger” in the “archetype” of the trickster, as “no one seems to know he-she-its true name, because he-she-it is protean with changes of . . . identity” (46). Accordingly, Ellison endeavours to stabilise black identity in a pre-Civil Rights society in which African-Americans were denied many individual liberties. Ellison believes that “in the Anglo-Saxon branch of American folklore,” of which blackface minstrelsy is a major facet, “the Negro is reduced to a negative sign that usually appears in a comedy of the grotesque” (48). Ellison’s statement here is valid; however, the type of grotesque comedy to which he refers is not that of Carnival, but rather what Bakhtin calls the “Romantic grotesque,” which lacks the regenerative nature of Carnival. Contrarily, Carnival is antithetical to individuality, instead, it promotes the renewal of community through laughter. Identity becomes liminal in Carnival, as a levelling of all social stratification, and consequently a reunification of the public body, occurs.

According to Ellison, “masking” is the “joke” at the core of American collective consciousness. In his words, “masking is a play upon possibility, and ours is a society in which possibilities are many. When American life is most American, it is apt to be most theatrical” (54). Congruently, the *pícaro* is certainly a performer; he or she deceives in order to subvert the hegemony. Quixote and Sancho “enchant” one another as well as others in acts of deceptive performance. And finally, Ned McCaslin takes on the role of Brer Rabbit by donning the mask of the smart man playing dumb. All of these intertextual metatheatrical acts are carried out in order to misrepresent reality, but with morally relative objectives of course. Bakhtin maintains that in the folk culture of Carnival, “the mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation . . . it rejects conformity to oneself” (*Rabelais* 39-40). With this in mind, the point where Ellison’s conceptualisation and the carnivalesque mask diverge becomes evident. Ellison observes the de-individualization of the mask to be degrading, nonetheless, “degradation” is precisely what brings the ideal back into the sphere of the material, the regeneration of Carnival. On the other hand, in the Romantic grotesque, the mask “is stripped

of its original richness and acquires other meanings alien to its primitive nature... The Romantic mask loses almost entirely its regenerating and renewing element and acquires a somber hue” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 40). The mask associated with the Romantic grotesque is the source of blackface minstrelsy. Concomitantly, accounting for Faulkner’s confluence with the Quixotic Picaresque, which is steeped in carnivalesque folklore, the mask worn by Ned is not that of minstrelsy, but rather that of Carnival.

Despite the trickster’s sagacity, he or she can also be tricked, just as is evident when Sancho copies Quixote’s methods of enchantment to represent a peasant woman as his ladylove, Dulcinea. Put another way, the masterful trickster—*pícaro*—can also be turned into a fool. However, the trickster’s status as fool is liminal. This calls to mind a famous quote from *Quixote*: “the most perceptive character in a play is the fool, because the man who wishes to seem simple cannot possibly be a simpleton” (Cervantes 479). Here, the great American joke of the smart man playing dumb echoes Quixote’s claim. The rogue and the fool have appeared side by side since the inception of the modern novel. As Bakhtin affirms, “together with the image of the rogue (and often fusing with him) there appears the image of the *fool*—either of an actual simpleton or the image of the mask of a rogue” (*Dialogic* 402). Bakhtin continues, “between the rogue and the fool there emerges, as a unique coupling of the two, the image of the clown. He is a rogue who dons the mask of a fool in order to motivate distortions and shufflings of languages and labels, thus unmasking them by not understanding them” (*Dialogic* 404-05). Correlatively, in Faulkner’s novel, Ned takes on the performative role of the carnivalesque clown, not the minstrel, and thus constantly maintains his social mastery, remaining one step ahead of the hegemonic actors that seek to oppress him.

Bakhtin details the rise of the novel with the simultaneous fall of the epic, adding that as the founder of the modern novel, Cervantes was of the utmost importance in this historical literary process (*Dialogic* 4). Cervantes usurps the epic genre, particularly that of the Greco-Roman tradition, via parody. For Bakhtin, laughter, perhaps the most vital element of Carnival, denigrates the epic (*Dialogic* 23). During Carnival, all officials—kings, priests, etc.—were subject to the public’s laughter; it was not merely a spectacle, as the people truly participated in the festivities, it was a celebration of reality—materiality—without end (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 7). Moreover, the laughter of the people returns the ideal world back into the material world—corporeality. That is to say, the parodic humor of Carnival paints reality in reverse. Correspondingly, during Carnival, a peasant can become a governor, a madman a knight, and even windmills giants.

In Carnival, laughter is not intended to be maliciously mocking; rather it renders the world and all its inhabitants into an expansive burlesque in which all members of society experience reunion. As Bakhtin declares, “[Carnival] has a universal spirit; it is...the world’s revival and renewal, in which all take part... It was most clearly expressed and experienced in the Roman Saturnalias...[the] return of Saturn’s golden age upon earth” (*Rabelais* 8). Congruently, Don Quixote wishes to return to the era of Saturnalias—utopia—and thus invokes the Age of Gold:

[f]ortunate the age and fortunate the times called golden by the ancients, and not because gold, which in this our age of iron is so highly esteemed, could be found then with no effort, but because those who lived in that time did not know the two words *thine* and *mine*. [original emphasis] (Cervantes 76)

Here, Quixote is speaking to a group of shepherds, relishing in the simple beauty of acorns, and romantically reflecting on pastoral life, when “all was peace, friendship, and harmony” (Cervantes 76). In this way Cervantes parodies the pastoral novels of the Middle Ages, yet another high genre equal in popularity to *las novelas de caballería* [chivalric romances] because of their romanticised vision of the past. Accordingly, the theme of utopia is central to *Quixote*.

José Antonio Maravall suggests Cervantes’s irony is pervasive, claiming that *Quixote* satirises all utopian illusions. Maravall associates the term “heroism” with the “morals of traditional society,” and thus asserts that *Quixote* “breaking with the archaic style of books of chivalry...portrays the bitter and serene lamentation of an obsolescent social sector over a new epoch which denies the hero his place in it” (24). Bakhtin parallels Maravall’s position when he asserts that Cervantes brings the ideal world “back down to earth,” corporeal reality (*Rabelais* 22). Cervantes symbolizes this point with a carnivalesque image: “hastily

[Quixote] pulled off his breeches and was left wearing only his skin and shirttails, and then, without further ado, he kicked his heels trice, turned two cartwheels with his head down and his feet in the air, and revealed certain things" (204). In this cartwheel scene, Cervantes is invoking what James Iffland calls "symbolic inversion;" as he affirms, "symbolic inversion [is] the tendency to lower all that is high, all that is exalted and respected, in order to put in its place all that is inferior, humble, etc." [my translation] (59). In this way, Cervantes demonstrates the insanity of heroic idealism in the modern state and consequently elevates the popular culture of Carnival. As Bakhtin avers, "madness is inherent to all grotesque forms, because madness makes men look at the world with different eyes... In folk grotesque, madness is a parody of official reason" (*Rabelais* 38). It is obvious here that Quixote sees the world in reverse as is typical in Carnival, but the true nature of his madness remains ambiguous.

Cervantes's grotesque fiction stems from its folkloric roots, and one of the fundamental themes of *Quixote* is the body and corporeality. In Cervantine Carnival, the body belongs to the public; it is a focal point for communal laughter (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 26). Don Quixote's genitals and buttocks that is, his lower bodily stratum show up quite blatantly in the aforementioned cartwheel scene, and it is in this episode and others that Quixote's grotesque body becomes a topic of laughter. Sancho embodies the grotesque in relation to "those parts of the body that are open to the outside world" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 26) as well, perhaps most notably in the famous scene in which he messes his pants. Although Don Quixote responds to the repugnant sounds and smells created by Sancho in a mocking manner, the knight-errant's mind is stuck in an ideal world in which faeces are non-existent. Hence, Cervantes calls his readers' attention to the fact that defecation is only natural, even something to laugh at, but certainly nothing to hide. Bakhtin reaffirms this position here, "[t]he people's laughter which characterized all forms of grotesque realism from immemorial times was liked with the bodily lower stratum. Laughter degrades and materializes . . . [and] the absolute lower stratum is always laughing" (*Rabelais* 20, 22). Correspondingly, Cervantes invokes the folkloric tradition of the grotesque when he represents Sancho's buttocks and act of defecation, thereby reintegrating his individual body back into the public body of Carnival.

While Sancho is the "fool," in Bakhtinian terms, of *los duques*' [the Dukes'] extravagant private spectacle, in other instances, he takes on the role of the "clown"—the fusion of the fool and the "rogue." In such scenes, the reader observes Sancho wearing the carnivalesque mask of the smart man playing dumb. Accordingly, Sancho relies on deceptive tactics typical of the trickster figure in order to "disenchant" Quixote. In the final episodes of Part I, although Quixote has been "enchanted" by the Priest and the Barber, Sancho is keenly aware of their scheme. However when Sancho fails to convince Quixote with commonsense, he plays a part in his master's artifice, i.e. performs the role of clown. Because Quixote has never read anything about a knight-errant jailed in a cage being led through a procession, he is baffled by his current circumstances. Nevertheless, he ignores his concerns, believing that because he is a "new knight in the world" (Cervantes 406), he is destined for a different path. Still, he asks the opinion of his squire and Sancho replies, "I don't know what I think...since I'm not as well read as your grace in errant writing, but even so, I'd say and even swear that these phantoms . . . are not entirely Catholic" (Cervantes 406). Sancho is well aware of the deception taking place; yet, he attempts to reason with Quixote on his own terms. In other words, Sancho plays dumb and goes along with the fantastical imaginings of his master in order to trick him into seeing the Priest and the Barber's artifice. Sancho, invoking the carnivalesque spirit, returns the ideal to the corporeal. Specifically, Sancho asks Quixote if he has "had the desire and will to pass what they call major and minor waters" (Cervantes 420). In the vernacular, Sancho inquires if Quixote needs to urinate or defecate. Here, Sancho is clearly drawing on contemporaneous popular culture in reminding Quixote of his humanity. Sancho reasons, again in terms that Quixote will understand, "you can conclude that people who don't eat, or drink, or sleep, or do the natural things I've mentioned are enchanted" (Cervantes 421). Sancho thus frees his master so that he may evacuate his bowels off in the distance; as Cervantes writes, "Don Quixote moved away with Sancho to a remote spot and returned much relieved" (423). In these episodes, Sancho plays the carnivalesque clown, a trickster who feigns ignorance at Quixote's illusions, and thereby disenchants his master while unmasking the Barber and the Priest. Thus, Sancho collapses the divide between the ideal and corporeal by evoking laughter with his toilet humour. In *The Reivers*, Faulkner's protagonists participate in a parallel phenomenon.

*The Reivers* has been continuously dubbed a picaresque; however, to simply classify the novel as such is a mischaracterization, as it also hinges on the motif of the ideal versus the material. Concomitantly, Faulkner's work is a Quixotic Picaresque. In his last novel, Faulkner displays particular empathy for the Other and demonstrates how the methods of the quixotic *pícaro*—the performative masking trickster—are most apt for enduring the oppressive forces of modernity in pre-Civil Rights American society. Furthermore, like *Quixote* and many early modern Spanish picaresque narratives, Faulkner's novel, and really the entire Yoknapatawpha repertoire, investigates the divide between urban and rural space. Correlatively, the road, and thus the automobile, is of the utmost significance in *The Reivers*. The “reivers” steal Boss' Winton Flyer and head from rural Jefferson to metropolitan Memphis seeking adventure away from home. In this way, Faulkner explores the dialogic relationship between the industrial and the agrarian. Ginés supports this assertion, claiming, “Faulkner's fictional world portrays . . . a clash between the values of society rooted in tradition and those brought about by industrial capitalism” (73). In Faulkner's finale, perhaps the most obvious iteration of this motif is manifested in the Winton Flyer. Boss' automobile is symbolic of the possibility for social mobility brought about by the modern world, a possibility that was frankly nonexistent in the Old South.

Although she largely disregards *The Reivers*, Ginés offers a compelling study of Cervantes's confluence with Southern literature, paying special attention to Faulkner. However, by focusing principally on Faulkner's white aristocratic characters, Ginés does not adequately explore Sancho's connections to the lower classes of Yoknapatawpha. The Snopeses and the “mud-farmer” among others all embody Sancho's opportunism, pragmatism, and materialism, rather than the idealism of Quixote. These characters are the paradigmatic extreme of Sancho's, as well as the *pícaro*'s, commonsense philosophy, which places one's self-interest over communal prosperity, but such pragmatism has an inherent vice. In *The Reivers*, the “mud-farmer” is representative of this philosophy, as he cultivates a bog with the purpose of trapping unlucky passersby, so that he may pull them out with a team of mules at a steep cost. Such acts of exploitation are the forces of modernity—the rampant scorched-earth form of capitalism—that Faulkner is most vehement in railing against in his ironic and grotesque treatment of Snopesian rogues. Nevertheless, he looks more favourably upon quixotic *pícaros* like Lucius, Boon, and Ned.

While Lucius is not himself an outsider, the formative life events he relates in his tale are learned via experiences with two socially marginalised characters—*pícaros*, Boon and Ned. Boon possesses many features typical of the *pícaro*; like Lazarillo, his origins are opaque, as he was practically orphaned. Furthermore, Boon is described as childlike and mischievous, yet also heroic, as he exhibits a sense of rugged individualism—the frontier spirit characteristic of Huck Finn. Ned's status as an outsider is more complex; he is an African-American man, and although he bears the name McCaslin, he works as a servant for the Priests, and yet is still considered “kin.” The flexibility of Ned's identity allows him to navigate the colour line with remarkable dexterity. At different times in the novel, through a protean ability to act in accordance with the conventions of Jefferson society, Ned is able to embody the social role of both blacks and whites. In addition to these picaresque qualities, Lucius, Boon, and Ned also hold onto their sense of communal idealism, rendering them quixotic *pícaros*.

The reader encounters the perspective of Lucius as a child and in old age, and thus is witness to his moral transformation. Although Boss has instilled in Lucius the ideals of the Old South, he nonetheless learns the art of the trickster from Boon, Ned, and Others. Lucius offers his grandson an anecdotal piece of advice early in the narrative, and later on, the reader unearths the origins of this hand-me-down imperative. Recalling the past, elderly Lucius recognises the generational differences between he and his grandson. As he instructs,

you were born too late to be acquainted with mules . . . I rate mules second only to rats in intelligence, the mule followed in order by cats, dogs, and horses last—assuming of course that you accept my definition of intelligence: which is the ability to cope with environment . . . The rat of course I rate first. He lives in your house . . . eats what you eat . . . you cannot get rid of him; were he not a cannibal, he would long since have inherited the earth . . . The mule I rate second. But only second because you can make him work for you. But that too only within his own rigid self-set regulations . . . Free of the obligations of ancestry and the responsibilities of posterity, he . . . is immortal . . . still free, still coping. (Faulkner 121)

Such interjections exemplify the dialogic nature of Lucius' autobiographical narrative, that which is typical of the picaresque mode. Lucius' definition of intelligence originates from his sense of rugged individualism. He despises rats—Snopesian rogues—who exploit others for selfish gains, whereas conversely, he admires the mule's rootlessness and its ability to endure. In old age, Lucius' philosophy is polyphonic; it is an amalgamation of voices shaped by Otherness. As the reader learns in due course, the source of Lucius' folk wisdom is a tale he heard as a child from Uncle Parsham, an elderly African-American man. As Uncle Parsham inculcates in young Lucius:

A mule aint like a horse. When a horse gets a wrong notion in his head, all you got to do is swap him another one for it . . . A mule is different. He can hold two notions at the same time and the way to change one of them is to act like you believe he thought of changing it first. He'll know different, because mules have got sense. But a mule is a gentleman too, and when you act courteous and respectful at him . . . he'll act courteous and respectful back at you. (Faulkner 245)

Uncle Parsham's commonsense wisdom draws on the popular culture of twentieth-century rural Mississippi analogously to the way in which Sancho's folk philosophy draws on that of early modern Spain. In these parallel perspectives pragmatism, opportunism, and communal compromise are vital elements. As can be realised from the dialogue between grandpa Lucius and Uncle Parsham's words, though the rat may be the most intelligent, it is pragmatic to a fault, utterly shrewd and merciless; contrarily, the mule, as opposed to the foolish horse, is still highly intelligent but also willing to compromise. The mule goes along with the generic conventions of his social role, that is to say, the mule is a smart man playing dumb. While the mule lets the master think he is in control, in all reality, the mule is always one step ahead. The mule exhibits a quixotic pragmatism akin to the picaresque ways of Lazarillo and Sancho, a moral relativism that considers the Other.

While Faulkner's carnivalesque rendering of Yoknapatawpha is not as overt as the upside down depiction of Spain in *Quixote*, *The Reivers*, does still mock the Golden Age of Jefferson's aristocratic society. Ned's laughter, his recurring "hee hee hee," is a reminder of the carnivalesque spirit. Nonetheless, whereas Cervantes is rather blunt in his regenerative descriptions of the bodily lower stratum, Faulkner holds onto his sense of Southern gentility; yet, he too invokes the grotesque buttocks in a scene in which Ned expels flatus. As Lucius and Boon are driving along, "suddenly Boon [says], What's that smell? Was it you? But before [Lucius] could deny it," Boon pulls over and checks the rear of the automobile, where he surprisingly finds Ned (Faulkner 69). Here, Ned's flatulence evokes carnivalesque laughter and sets the reivers out on their regenerative adventure to Memphis. While many have contended such scenes are childishly humorous, this is fallacy. Instead of drawing cheap laughs, Faulkner's comedy serves a much more specific purpose, as he is channelling the grotesque elements of Carnival.

On their adventure, the reivers quite literally return to earth. Although the trio possesses a cutting-edge piece of modern machinery, the automobile's industrial power is no match for mother Earth, as Lucius, Boon, and Ned get mired in the mud-farmer's bog along their journey and thus fall prey to capitalist exploitation by one of the rats of Faulkner's universe. However, typical of Boon's rugged individualism, he suggests they first attempt to free the vehicle without assistance, and it is in this episode that Lucius, Boon, and Ned are initiated into the rite of Carnival via their experience with the materiality of Earth and the corporeality of all life. As Faulkner writes:

the peaceful quiet, remote, sylvan, almost primeval setting of ooze and slime and jungle growth and heat in which the very mules themselves, peacefully swishing and stamping at the teeming infinitesimal invisible myriad life . . . were not only unalien but in fact curiously appropriate . . . the automobile: the expensive useless mechanical toy rated in power and strength by the dozens of horses, yet held helpless and impotent in the almost infantile clutch of a few inches of the temporary confederation of . . . earth and water . . . and the three of us, three forked identical and now unrecognizable mud-colored creatures. (87)

In this passage, one can clearly observe the destratification of class and regeneration of the public body when Lucius, Boon, Ned, and even the mules, are reintegrated into the material realm—Earth—as the trio becomes unified. Moreover, the forces of modernity—the mechanical artifice of industry manifested in



Boss' Winton Flyer—are rendered defunct while nature prevails. Nevertheless, the rat-like mud-farmer remains up on his porch in the private realm—like *los duques*, untouched by earthly renewal, waiting to take advantage of others. He is Snopesian, entirely self-serving, the rogue at its extreme.

Despite that Faulkner displays his sense of humour in each work, albeit often subtly, *The Reivers* protrudes from the rest of the Yoknapatawpha corpus. Bakhtin observes a split between two types of grotesque fictions, and while many of the Yoknapatawpha novels engage in the humour of what Bakhtin calls the Romantic grotesque, that of *The Reivers* more closely adheres to the laughter typical of the carnivalesque spirit. In the view of Brannon Costello, unscrupulous critics have generally perceived *The Reivers* to be “a nostalgic victory lap” through Yoknapatawpha, glorifying the idealism of the Old South's aristocratic class (92). I agree as many critics have miscomprehended Faulkner's grotesque comedy by overlooking his work's dialogic relationship with carnivalesque folklore. Ryuichi Yamaguchi supports these claims, as he states, one can “locate Faulkner's humor in the vein of the Old Southwest humor and, more generally the carnivalesque” (11), and it is Ned who most fully embodies the carnivalesque spirit.

In *The Reivers*, readers encounter a highly nuanced African-American character personified in Ned, who also wears the mask of the carnivalesque clown, the smart man playing dumb. Walter Taylor, in his piece “How to Change the Joke without Slipping the Yoke,” draws on Ellison, arguing that Ned, like Jim in *Huck Finn*, is portrayed in the minstrel tradition. As Taylor puts forth, “Ned McCaslin is the epitome of the masking joker . . . he glides, chameleonlike, through a repertoire of roles, the most important of which is identified by Lucius as ‘Uncle Remus’” (118). In opposition, I see Ned as Brer Rabbit, a trickster, who plays the role of minstrel among others in order to carry along his scheme. Additionally, while Taylor argues that Ned is unaware of his “self-maiming,” that is, that the joke is on him, I entirely disagree. Taylor suggests that Ned's malapropisms, such as when he calls sardines, “sour deans,” demonstrate his ignorance (119); however, I believe these malapropisms to merely be a performance; that is to say, Ned is much wiser than Taylor gives him credit for. Ned's perspicacity enables him to realise which side of the colour line works to his advantage in any particular social situation. Accordingly, his shape-shifting role-play does not stem from minstrelsy, but rather from the trickster tradition and congruently the Quixotic Picaresque.

Ned's elaborate plan to help his relative Bobo Beauchamp drives the plot of *The Reivers*. Although Ned's masterfully crafted metatheatrical artifice is not revealed until the finale, the reader eventually discerns that he held ulterior motives in coming along to Memphis. While Boon and Lucius are settling into Miss Reba's brothel for the evening, Ned trades Boss' Winton Flyer for Lightning—the Rocinante-like racehorse that will not run. When Lucius and Boon discover that Boss' car is in fact missing, they are in utter disbelief. Boon commands, “go get that horse. Where does the man live?” and Ned, wearing the mask of the fool, plays dumb: “which man? . . . What you want with him?” (Faulkner 118). Little by little, Ned reveals snippets of his scheme. As he tells Boon, “Let [the man] alone. We dont want him yet. We wont need him until after the race . . . What we gonter do is win back that automobile” (Faulkner 118-9). When Lucius and Boon question Ned's reasons for taking on such an impossible task, he tells a white lie and (mis)represents his true intentions of assisting Bobo, instead he claims, “naturally [Boss] wouldn't mind owning the horse back too, long as he's already got the automobile” (Faulkner 119). It seems like a rather farfetched plan, yet Ned is known around Yoknapatawpha for his legendary mule-breaking skills. Accordingly, Ned figures that he will have no problem making a stubborn horse run, as he retains the same folk wisdom about horses as Uncle Parsham. Upon determining that Lightning has a special affinity for sardines, Ned clandestinely coaxes the horse with this treat on race day. Yet, in a moment of premonition, Ned decides to bet on another horse, though he keeps this decision a secret. Unfortunately, for young Lucius, Lightning loses the last heat of the race, and thus, unaware of Ned's winnings, he feels as if he has lost and failed his grandfather. Nevertheless, Lucius ultimately is gratified when Ned reveals his virtuosic artifice of deception and readers learn that the elaborate scheme was undertaken in order to pay off a Memphis loan shark—another Snopesian capitalist rat—who manipulates Bobo. With this desire to help his community, Ned is without a doubt another idealist trickster, a quixotic *pícaro*.

When all has been settled, in curiosity Boss asks Ned to explain himself. In this scene, the reader learns that Bobo was forced to steal the horse under pressure from the loan shark; as Lucius describes

the predicament, “the horse less than half a mile away, practically asking to be stolen; and the white man who knew it and who had given Bobo an ultimatum” (Faulkner 291). So, Ned decided to devise an artifice of deception, his intelligent plan that purposefully hinges on the confusion of appearances and reality. Nonetheless, even when Ned ostensibly reveals all to Boss at the end, “*el lector discreto*” [“the discrete reader”] will identify the unreliability of Ned’s narrative within Lucius’ larger polyphonic autobiographical account. Surrounded by white men who want answers, Ned again dons the carnivalesque mask of the clown in order to use the color line to his advantage. When Ned is asked, “suppose you had failed to make [the horse] run, and lost him too. What about Bobo then?” he replies frankly, “that would have been Bobo’s lookout . . . It wasn’t me advised him to give up Mississippi cotton farming and take up Memphis frolicking and gambling for a living” (Faulkner 293). The white men of the hegemonic aristocratic class approve of this retort and even offer Ned a “toddy,” a remarkable gesture considering the contemporaneous society. Ned is exceptionally adept in telling Boss and the other aristocrats exactly what they want to hear; as he appeases, “young folks . . . they dont hear good. Anyhow, they got to learn for themselves that roguishness dont pay” (Faulkner 294). Considering that Ned enacted this prolonged deceptive scheme via quixotic means of trickery, his statement is peppered with irony. Ned quite literally utters one thing and Signifies another. Here, Ned clearly invokes the art of Signifyin(g), as he plays into the expectations of the hegemonic class via parodying their chivalric code of honor by pretending to repudiate the ways of the *pícaro*. However, when Ned asserts, “roguishness dont pay” his language is riddled with polysemia. In other words, Ned signifies that trickery only leads to trouble, but on another level of meaning, he Signifies quite the opposite, as readers observe that Ned’s quixotically picaresque acts of deception have brought about communal prosperity. In this vein, Ned represents the epitome of the modern individual, a quixotic *pícaro* who is well equipped to endure the oppressive forces of modernity in multiethnic America. In Lucius’ words to his grandson, “Ned had carried the load alone, held back the flood, shored up the crumbling levee with whatever tools he could reach” (Faulkner 304). In relaying his philosophy shaped by Otherness to his own descendant, old man Lucius perpetuates the way of the quixotic *pícaro*. Furthermore, one can imagine that his grandson will pass along a parallel philosophy, and so on the rhizome continues into infinity.

The reivers neither fully embody Don Quixote nor Sancho, rather their comportment resides somewhere between those of the two archetypal characters. This is especially true with Ned, who artfully navigates the color line throughout the novel. Ned must partake in acts of trickery for the Good of his community. Like a *pícaro*, he is pragmatic in his acts of deception, but considering his social position, such deception is a necessary “evil.” Nevertheless, Ned still personifies some aspects of Quixote, as his scheme was not undertaken for his own materialistic self-benefit, but rather to help his community—Bobo. Keeping in mind Boss’ hand-me-down words: “your outside is just what you live in, sleep in, and has little connection with who you are and even less with what you do” (Faulkner 304), those who are able to perform their identity like a *pícaro*, in the protean fashion of a trickster, by telling white lies only when necessary, will be most astute in navigating modern multiethnic American life. Ultimately the quixotic *pícaro* will be the catalyst to engender the regenerative transformation of modern society, and it is Lucius who carries this folk wisdom onwards. At the end of *The Reivers*, and thus the finale of his massive literary career, Faulkner suggests the generation of Lucius’ grandson—regardless of race, gender, and class, those who come to know a life of Otherness, will be the impetus for the United States’ prosperous multicultural future. Considering Deleuze and Guattari’s “principle of multiplicity,” which proposes, “multiplicities are rhizomatic” and thus have “neither subject nor object” (8), in performing a multiplicity of social roles, the quixotic *pícaro* embodies a liminal subjectivity. Accordingly, he or she is a pluralistic individual, the very personification of multiplicity; in other words, he or she does not have a rigidly moulded self-consciousness, but rather a highly adaptable fluid identity. In this way, the quixotic *pícaro* contributes to the unconquerably entangled opacity of modern nation states. Such opacity (the absence of definitive roots and the obfuscation of representation and reality) disrupts all social hierarchies and cultural hegemony, leading to mobility, the regeneration of the public body, and hope for a more utopian world.

## Works Cited

- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1981.
- , *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quixote*. Trans. Edith Grossman. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.
- Costello, Brannon. *Plantation Airs: Racial Paternalism and the Transformations of Class in Southern Fiction, 1945-1971*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Shadow and Act*. New York: Random House, 1964.
- Faulkner, William. *The Reivers*. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Ginés, Montserrat. *The Southern Inheritors of Don Quixote*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Iffland, James. *De fiestas y aguafiestas: risa, locura e ideología en Cervantes y Avellaneda*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1999.
- Maravall, José Antonio. *Utopia and Counterutopia in the "Quixote"*. Trans. Robert W. Felkel. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991.
- Reed, Walter L. *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Scheub, Harold. *Trickster and Hero: Two Characters in the Oral and Written Traditions of the World*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.
- Stein, Jean. "William Faulkner, The Art of Fiction No. 12." *The Paris Review* 12.1 (Spring 1956): 28-52.
- Taylor, Walter. "Faulkner's *Reivers*: How to Change the Joke without Slipping the Yoke," *Faulkner and Race: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1986*. Eds. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987: 111-29.
- Yamaguchi, Ryuichi. *Faulkner's Artistic Vision: The Bizarre and the Terrible*. Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004.