

Becoming Joaquin Murrieta: John Rollin Ridge and the Making of an Icon

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## Abstract

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*Becoming Joaquin Murrieta: John Rollin Ridge and the Making of an Icon* analyzes the transnational archive of Joaquin Murrieta narratives. An icon of Mexican resistance during the California Gold Rush era, Murrieta has been described by Luis Leal as “the only Californian hero on the level of art, history, and myth.” This dissertation explores the incarnation of Murrieta’s elusive subjectivity in the first novel written by a Native American: Cherokee writer John Rollin Ridge’s 1854 publication, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit*. By examining the multigenerational influence of Ridge’s novel as the textual origin point of the Murrieta archive, *Becoming Joaquin Murrieta* proposes a new understanding of Ridge’s global significance.

Joaquin Murrieta is unique among folk heroes in that performers often assume his persona and metaphorically become the mythical hero, a pattern evident in the traditional borderlands ballad, “El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta,” and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s poem, *I Am Joaquin*. This pattern is rooted in Ridge’s configuration of Murrieta as a persona with the capacity to be anywhere at any time. *Becoming Joaquin Murrieta* reads Ridge’s novel in conjunction with several notable and influential versions of the story: the 1859 *California Police Gazette* plagiarism of Ridge; Ireneo Paz’s 1904 plagiarism of the *Police Gazette*; Adolfo Carrillo’s 1922 short story; Walter Noble Burns’s 1932 novel, *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*, and the 1936 MGM film of the same name; Los Madrugadores’s 1934 recording of the corrido; Gonzales’s epic Chicano poem of 1967; Pablo Neruda’s 1967 play, *Fulgur y Muerte de Joaquin Murieta (Splendor and Death of Joaquin Murieta)*; and Isabel Allende’s 1999 novel, *Hija de la Fortuna (Daughter of Fortune)*. In tracing the transnational production of the Murrieta narrative, *Becoming Joaquin Murrieta* exposes nationalist constructions that shape the archive’s patterns of racialized violence and culturally sanctioned retaliation.

## Dedication

For my family, who have supported me through every stage of this project. With gratitude that exceeds the range of words, this work is dedicated in particular to my grandmother, Frances Elaine Morley (née Hayes); my mother, Ann Foreman Suagee-Payne; my father, Steven Joseph Hausman; my amazing children, Maya Grace Hausman and Sean Suagee Hausman; and especially my wife, Denise Hall Hausman. Without you, this does not exist.

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### Note on the spelling of “Murrieta”

In this dissertation, I spell Murrieta with the double “rr”: “Murrieta.” In doing so, I follow the Hispanophone tradition, wherein the name is typically spelled “Murrieta.” I use this spelling out of respect for people with this surname. Indeed, Mexicans and Chicano/as who claim to be descendents of Joaquin Murrieta spell the name “Murrieta.”

However, Joaquin’s last name is often spelled differently in American English. The Americanized spelling usually involves a single “r”: “Murieta.” It is believed that this spelling reflects Anglophone difficulties pronouncing the trilled “rr.” John Rollin Ridge uses the American spelling in his 1854 novel, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*. Nearly all nineteenth-century plagiarisms of the Ridge novel tended to reproduce its single “r” spelling, and the majority of contemporary American versions have followed suit and spelled the name “Murieta.” Contemporary Americanist scholars who focus primarily on Ridge’s novel, rather than on the Murrieta archive in general, usually follow Ridge’s spelling, “Murieta.” (Some rather inaccurate American spellings, such as “Muriati” and “Muriatta,” surfaced in California in the 1850s but were thereafter rarely used. Other inaccurate spellings, such as “Murietta,” have appeared on occasion in twentieth-century American texts.) These American misspellings of “Murrieta” have been perceived by some Spanish-speaking scholars not only as a misrepresentation of the name but also as a sign of larger linguistic and cultural misunderstandings.

Chilean writers are unique among Latin American writers who reproduce the Murrieta narrative in that they tend to follow the American spelling, “Murieta.” The idea of the “Chilean Joaquin” was created by Roberto Hyenne’s 1862 plagiarism of the Ridge novel, which followed the Anglocentric nineteenth-century trend and spelled the name “Murieta.” When directly quoting from American or Chilean texts, I reproduce the original spelling used in these publications (which is usually “Murieta”). I use these original (mis)spellings in order to accurately represent the variety of shapes that everything about Joaquin Murrieta has taken over the years. Regardless of these variations in spelling, all references to “Joaquin Murrieta” and “Joaquin Murieta” are references to the same person.

## Introduction

### Why Joaquin Murrieta?<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the enigmatic Joaquin Murrieta, Pablo Neruda claims that “whoever approaches the truth or legend of this bandit will feel the charismatic force of his gaze” (Foreword to *Fulgur y Muerte*). Not only do I thoroughly agree with Neruda’s sentiment, I also offer this dissertation as evidence in support of Neruda’s point. Reflecting on the process of writing his 1967 “insurrectionary cantata” about Joaquin, Neruda claims that Murrieta “took to the road of my book and galloped off with his life and drama” (180). Something very similar happened with this dissertation: Joaquin Murrieta captivated my imagination and rode off with my doctoral research project.

When I first began to conceptualize my dissertation in 2005, I intended to develop an analysis of diasporic Cherokee fiction. I was obsessed with the ways that Native American writers alter historical events and reconstruct “traditions” in order to cultivate a diasporic consciousness in the post-colonization world.<sup>2</sup> As a diasporic Cherokee citizen and creative writer myself, I was drawn toward other diasporic Cherokee writers, largely because I felt more liberty to offer critique and constructive criticism of “my own people.” As the first work of fiction created by a Cherokee writer, and as the first novel written by a Native American, it only seemed logical for my project to begin with John Rollin Ridge’s 1854 novel, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*.<sup>3</sup> It took very little time, however, for Joaquin to ensnare my imagination with “the charismatic force of his gaze.” I was mesmerized by the depth of UC Berkeley’s archives about Joaquin Murrieta, as well as the fact that Ridge essentially invented a fictional character that came to occupy a crucial role in the official California state history. By December 2005, the end of my first semester of graduate study at Berkeley, my project was beginning to transform. Six months later, Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice published a captivating tribal-centric analysis of Cherokee literature, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*. While Justice’s study is otherwise commendable, its omission of Ridge’s novel stoked my imagination. Professor Justice’s subsequent comment to me that *Joaquin Murieta* was “too complicated” to adequately address within the theoretical framework of *Our Fire Survives the Storm* confirmed my belief in the necessity of a book-length analysis of Ridge’s novel and its role in the making of Murrieta’s infamous persona. No longer a study of Cherokee fiction, my project had morphed into a Native-centric analysis of the transnational archive of Joaquin Murrieta narratives. Much like the central concept of this project—“becoming Joaquin Murrieta”—the focus of my dissertation was pulled by the gravity of Murrieta’s complexity into his archival maze of paradox and contradiction. The subject of my dissertation had become Joaquin Murrieta.

Joaquin Murrieta became the focus of this project because my research on Ridge revealed a severely under-studied junction in literary criticism. My early engagements with recent scholarship on Ridge’s novel showed me, with painful clarity, several points of division between Native American literary studies, Chicano/a literary studies, and the larger field of American studies. Chicanocentric scholarship on Joaquin Murrieta, as well as transnational Latin American scholarship on Murrieta, seemed to know very little about John

Rollin Ridge and his Cherokee background beyond Joseph Henry Jackson's introduction to the 1955 University of Oklahoma Press reprint of Ridge's book.<sup>4</sup> However, in contrast to the inherent transnationality of Latino/a scholarship on Murrieta, literary scholarship on Ridge that grants primary importance to Ridge's Native American identity—precisely the angle I came from when first engaging the book—seemed terribly provincial and isolated from the rest of the world.<sup>5</sup> Just as Latinocentric research has tended to oversimplify or ignore Ridge's impact on the Murrieta narrative, Native-centric research has tended to oversimplify or ignore the global legacy of Ridge's novel. At the same time, Americanist and New Americanist scholarship has tended to use John Rollin Ridge as a multicultural specimen of early Native American literature, but its engagements with Native and Chicano political concerns are often marginal or vacuous.<sup>6</sup> These various degrees of disconnection gave me a sense of purpose as a Native scholar researching Murrieta with a transnational focus.

Joaquin Murrieta embodies cultural conflict and contested space. The long-standing debate as to whether Murrieta was a freedom fighter or a terrorist only helps to keep Murrieta alive in the popular consciousness. But regardless of how one reads him, Joaquin Murrieta comes from *la frontera*, from a palimpsest of geographical and cultural borderlands. Murrieta is emblematic of the violence between the first and third worlds described in Gloria Anzaldúa's *La Frontera/Borderlands*. Murrieta's narrative incarnates the "contact zones" described by Mary Louise Pratt. And Murrieta personifies the possibilities for remapping American Studies called for by José David Saldívar's *Border Matters*. In other words, as a subject of scholarly inquiry, Joaquin Murrieta is a connective nexus, a terminus point where differing paradigms and political end games momentarily converge and often compete for primacy. Murrieta has a crucial role to play in the larger realignment of American literary studies, as well as studies of literatures of the U.S. West Coast and the Pacific Rim.

The title and controlling idea of this project—*Becoming Joaquin Murrieta*—reflects the fact that Joaquin Murrieta's distinctive subjectivity is an anomaly within the global pantheon of folk heroes. Joaquin Murrieta is like most folk heroes in that he tends to represent the "common" people. However, Murrieta is distinctly unlike other folk heroes in that he *not only represents* the common person; he is also a character that the common person *can become*. Evidenced by the Mexican folk ballad, "El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta," the California icon is unique among the heroic subjects whose stories are sung in Anglo ballads and Mexican corridos because *to sing Joaquin Murrieta's story is to become Joaquin Murrieta*. Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales utilized the corrido's curious subjectivity and transformed it into his epic anthem of the Chicano Movement, *I Am Joaquin*. However, while many scholars have analyzed the mestizo subjectivity of Gonzales's poem, they have not addressed how Gonzales frames Murrieta's anomalous subjectivity in relation to the larger archive of Murrieta narratives. *Becoming Joaquin Murrieta: John Rollin Ridge and the Making of an Icon* offers a necessary intervention in Murrieta scholarship—and transnational American studies in general—by using the construction of the hero's subjectivity as a means of reading the Murrieta archive from John Rollin Ridge to the present.

I am by no means the first researcher captivated by the "charismatic force" of Murrieta's persona who chose to spend years delving through the Berkeley archives in search of information on both Joaquin Murrieta and John Rollin Ridge. A small, but substantial,



group of scholars and intellectuals has preceded me: Francis Farquhar and Franklin Walker in the 1930s; Joseph Henry Jackson in the 1940s and early 1950s; Raymund Wood in the 1960s; Remi Nadeau and Frank Latta in the 1970s; Manuel Rojas, Maria Herrera-Sobek, Luis Leal, and James Varley in the 1980s and 1990s; Bruce Thornton, Shelley Streeby, and Robert McKee Irwin in the early 2000s. Because of the foundational research done by these scholars, I do not need to catalogue all the various versions of Joaquin Murrieta or uncover the basic facts of Ridge's effect upon the development of Joaquin's essential character. Indeed, these scholars have made omissions that have helped to reveal precisely how and where my archival analysis of Joaquin Murrieta can offer a new perspective on a relatively well-researched topic. As the first study of the Murrieta archive to focus on the pattern of assuming Murrieta's subjectivity, *Becoming Joaquin Murrieta* explores how Ridge's narrative construction of Murrieta's "absent body" has influenced the folk hero's multigenerational evolution.

Much, indeed most, scholarship on Joaquin Murrieta is drawn toward the dilemma of identifying "the real Joaquin."<sup>7</sup> Some scholars, such as Jackson, contend that Murrieta was almost entirely mythological, the name given to a boogeyman who never actually existed. Other scholars, such as Nadeau and Humberto Garza, reject the Joaquin-as-myth premise put forth by Jackson.<sup>8</sup> This camp insists that Joaquin Murrieta was a real person, someone whose story has been mythologized but remains grounded in verifiable facts. These two camps have antagonized each other for a century and a half. Indeed, the fact of their vehement disagreements does not illuminate the truth of Joaquin's identity as much as it demonstrates how the uncertainty surrounding Murrieta helps to keep his enigmatic persona alive in the popular consciousness. Generative though these debates have been, it is not my intention to necessarily take a side. Although the fact remains that there is zero empirically verifiable evidence concerning the existence of the singular hero, Joaquin Murrieta, prior to Ridge's novel, I do not want to discount the potential accuracy of anecdotal evidence and "family stories." The very fact that such stories exist is a testament to the ensnaring power of Joaquin's "charismatic gaze," and I loathe the thought that my research would seek to diminish, rather than enhance, that alluring power of the Murrieta legend.

Exemplified by the work of Streeby and Irwin, a group of contemporary scholars has sought to eschew the binary dilemma of attempting to prove or disprove Joaquin Murrieta's existence, opting instead to explore the evolution of the Murrieta mythos and the significance of the narrative's various changes across time and space. As Irwin puts it, "what is of interest here is not the biography of a man but the construction of a legend" (41). Irwin's *Bandits, Captives, Heroines, and Saints: Cultural Icons of Mexico's Northwest Borderlands* reads Murrieta as "a typical borderlands icon, representing no one group, signifying in multiple directions to multiple audiences" (40). Irwin notes that "[Murrieta's] migration to gold rush California and struggles on the U.S. side of the border are emblematic of Mexican borderlands life in the early years following the U.S.-Mexico war, and his notorious reputation in California signified heavily in Sonora. It signaled both the tensions of race and nation in the late-nineteenth-century borderlands" (40).

While Irwin's analysis focuses on cultural patterns from the Mexican side of the border, Streeby's analysis targets the promulgation of a national consciousness on the American side. Streeby's chapter on Murrieta in *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the*

*Production of Popular Culture* focuses primarily on Murrieta narratives post-Ridge. Streeby argues that as the Murrieta narrative “migrates across national boundary lines, it showcases the violence of U.S. nation- and empire-building, incessantly registers and sometimes crosses emerging class and racial boundaries, and thereby foregrounds the complex relationships between newly defined groups of ‘natives’ and ‘aliens’” (27). My project is aligned with the impulses of Streeby and Irwin in that I do not seek to verify or dispute claims to factuality; rather, I intend to illuminate how these claims signify larger patterns in the transnational Murrieta archive. However, both Streeby and Irwin emphasize post-Ridge Murrieta narratives, inspiring a range of questions about Ridge’s relationship to the archive spawned by his novel. *Becoming Joaquin Murrieta* builds upon their work by using a similar transborder lens to focus my analysis of Murrieta’s subjectivity and John Rollin Ridge’s legacy.

My emphasis on Murrieta’s subjectivity in relation to the process of myth-making is also inspired by a larger wave of scholarship about the manipulation of iconic “folk” narratives in the production of national or subnational consciousness. From the European side of the Atlantic, Stephen Knight’s research on the Robin Hood legend provides a valuable model of engaging a mythologized character not in terms of ultimate historical verifiability, but rather in terms of how generational mutations and alterations of the narrative speak to contextual dynamics and cultural urgencies. On the American side of the Atlantic, recent studies of American icons from the East Coast and the Deep South have taken a similar transgenerational approach. Two highly influential examples are Patricia Schroeder’s *Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture* (2004) and Scott Reynolds Nelson’s *Steel Drivin’ Man: John Henry, The Untold Story of an American Legend* (2006). Both Schroeder and Nelson apply a holistic perspective when reading characters have been manipulated through time. While Nelson and Schroeder treat their subjects differently than I do mine—Nelson bases his transgenerational analysis of John Henry on the premise that he has actually located the singular historical individual whose story became the legend (an assertion already made about Murrieta in Remi Nadeau’s *The Real Joaquin*, one that I have no desire to reiterate), and Schroeder relies on the very kind of verifiable empirical evidence concerning Robert Johnson’s existence that is simply unavailable in regards to Joaquin Murrieta—their methodologies inspire my holistic approach to Murrieta.

Joaquin Murrieta deserves recognition as an important American story. Ridge’s recently-awarded accolades as a pivotal “first” novelist in the history of U.S. literature have helped catalyze the process of recognizing Joaquin within a larger American context. Ridge’s book has been retroactively applauded as a transformative and paradigm-founding text. However, while the multiculturalist impetus in humanities scholarship smothers Ridge with long overdue posthumous recognition, the character of Joaquin Murrieta is still received with suspicion by the dominant American culture. Perhaps this suspicion is inevitable; Joaquin Murrieta supposedly had the highest body count of any “public enemy” in California history. But I suspect that Murrieta’s degree of exclusion from the American family of folk heroes is less about his supposedly bloody deeds than it is about his Mexican-American identity. Plenty of violent individuals—from George Washington to Jesse James—are canonized in American folklore. Yet Joaquin Murrieta, whom Luis Leal identifies as “the only Californian hero on the level of art, history, and myth” (Introduction xcvi), is often simply excluded from the ranks of “American folk heroes.” I contend that many Americans assume that the

bilingual and (supposedly) Sonoran-born Joaquin is essentially “immigrant,” “illegal,” or simply “non-American.” Unfortunately, Americanist scholars have often treated Joaquin Murrieta the same way that the larger Anglo American political system has treated Latin American people, Mexicans in particular. Mexicans have long been excluded systematically from the U.S. political apparatus and imagined as incompatible within the American system. This illusion of incompatibility continues to justify the suspicion of and frequent hostility toward Mexican-Americans in the United States. My dissertation aims to expose the methods through which these illusions of incompatibility are promulgated in literary texts, thus contributing to the process of articulating a more accurately inclusive sense of American cultural expression.

I resist the notion that the arts of greater Mexico are inherently separate from the greater American family. But the unfortunate fact is that scholars of Mexican corridos and Anglophone ballads rarely dialogue with each other in their work. All studies of “El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta” have considered the Murrieta corrido in relation to other corridos, never in relation to Anglophone American ballads from the East. Likewise, American ethnomusicologists have had copious amounts of Anglophone material to work with, and when coupled with the anti-Mexican exclusionary impulse long embedded in the expansionist American ethos, Mexican corridos have systematically been excluded from consideration as “American folk music.”<sup>9</sup> My project aims to address this problem. I am convinced that Murrieta’s value, particularly in terms of the anomalies that characterize his subjectivity, becomes evident within the context of a multilingual analysis of folk songs and traditional narratives.

Inspired by the paradigms of hemispheric Indigenous studies, my research on Murrieta is transnational because I refuse to settle for the illusions of inevitable incompatibility between Anglophone and Hispanophone cultures from the American continents. Joaquin Murrieta is a transnational icon, and as such he provides a vehicle for deconstructing the problematic paradigms of nationalist exceptionalism and isolationism. Especially important for Native American studies is that fact that Joaquin’s “absent body” is ultimately invented in a narrative created by a diasporic Native writer. Ridge’s role in the making of an icon is evidence to what Native scholars such as Jack Forbes have long believed: that Native Americans have had a direct influence on the world, an influence which has been systematically concealed by the anti-Indian bias inherent to the cultural machinery of the United States.<sup>10</sup> I aim to affirm the fact of Native Americans’ global influence by demonstrating the transnational impact of the first Native American novel.

*Becoming Joaquin Murrieta: John Rollin Ridge and the Making of an Icon* is American literary scholarship grounded in the work of a Native American author and Native American critical methodologies; and it aims to contribute to American studies, in general, and American ethnomusicology, in particular, from a transnational perspective. This dissertation is Joaquin Murrieta scholarship for the twenty-first century. It is for future generations of writers and researchers who “approach the truth or legend of this bandit” and become deeply affected by the “charismatic force” of his omnipresent persona.

## Chapter One

### The Mask of Murrieta: John Rollin Ridge as the First Native American Novelist

The life of John Rollin Ridge is so dramatically improbable that its tragic events obscure his achievements. (Rennard Strickland and David Farmer, *A Trumpet of Our Own* 10)

Ridge, grandson of traditional Cherokee leader Major Ridge and founding editor of the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper in California, promptly vanished from the landscape of American literature to be rediscovered a century later in a kind of ethnographic salvage operation. (Louis Owens, *I Hear the Train* 221)

John Rollin Ridge's 1854 fictional biography, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, is now recognized as the first Native American novel.<sup>1</sup> His publication provides a colorful origin point for the contemporary literary tradition of "the Native American novel," a fact that has been a mixed blessing for scholars of Native American literature. The book has inspired substantial criticism within the last twenty years, particularly from scholars looking to diversify the canon of nineteenth-century American literature.<sup>11</sup> Yet *Joaquin Murieta* has often been perplexing for those involved in the study of Native literatures, prompting us to question what exactly we mean by the phrase "Native American novel." In contrast to the work of canonized twentieth-century Native novelists—N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, and others—Ridge's novel is not explicitly about American Indians. Herein lies the rub. In our zeal to invent an idea of what the Native novel is and how it has evolved across generations, scholars of Native literatures have embraced the somewhat problematic notion that Ridge's book is a "masquerade" wherein Ridge plays out his revenge fantasies through the fictionalized masks of post-Gold Rush California.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have, in short, imagined that Joaquin is Ridge himself. Although it has proven fruitful, this interpretation reflects problematic critical methodologies that need to be reconsidered.

Many scholars of Native literatures read the character of Joaquin as a mask for Ridge himself and the novel's Mexican characters as masked symbols of Native Americans seeking to avenge the "wrongs" done against their "poor bleeding country" (Ridge, *Joaquin* 75).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Ridge's Cherokee identity invites scholars to read everything in the novel as a reflection of the Cherokee condition. From this perspective, it follows that an understanding of Ridge's personal, family, and tribal history will provide the keys needed to decode a distinctly Cherokee subtext over which the "surface plot" of the *Murrieta* narrative "rides ... like a palimpsest" (Owens, *Other Destinies* 32). This notion of *Joaquin Murieta* as Ridge's highly personalized "masquerade" has been so widely accepted and imitated in Native literary scholarship that it has become accepted as self-evident fact.

My claim here is not that the “masquerade thesis” is necessarily inaccurate. Certainly, the theory has merit. Nonetheless, it is an argument that can severely limit the significance of the novel. It has the potential to “ghettoize” Ridge’s book, constructing what is essentially a literary reservation around the text. By literary reservation, I mean a space wherein Native cultural identity and political sovereignty is of central importance, yet the exclusionary paradigms which demarcate the space’s geopolitical boundaries can affect, infect, and limit the full potential of the work in question. This critical dynamic encourages scholars to ignore the larger multinational and transcultural influence of Ridge’s narrative over several generations. Instead of reckoning with the novel’s global significance, the predominant interpretive lens of Ridge-as-Joaquin narrows the focus to a single Cherokee individual and his family. Instead of using knowledge of Ridge family history to interpret the novel’s complex renderings of textual manipulation or the process of granting cultural sanction to acts of violent revenge, the Ridge-as-Joaquin paradigm has yielded far too many analyses wherein the critical emphasis is less about the novel itself and much more about the capacity of the critic to produce an “authentically Native” critique. This retraction from the global sphere leads to a scholarly realm where mixedblood Native identity crises are given precedence over the actual events of the text in question.

Criticism on *Joaquin Murieta* is riddled with Native navel gazing. Or, as Robert McKee Irwin claims, it produces a critical “house of mirrors” wherein everything is a reflection of Ridge, rather than the Latino (particularly Sonoran) implications of the plot itself (66). Contemporary critical engagement with *Joaquin Murieta* must recognize how Nativist scholarship participates in the highly troublesome process of ghettoizing important minority-authored texts. What is at stake in this analysis is the viability of currently fashionable critical methodologies that aim to decode systems of Indigenous significance in Native American literary texts. In the pages that follow, I will critique this tendency to depend upon the author’s personal and cultural biography as the primary tool for interpreting and/or decoding works of Native American literature.

### **The Masquerade Thesis: Locating a Cherokee Story Beneath Ridge’s Narrative**

Despite the problems of overdependency on authorial biography, there is nonetheless good reason why Ridge’s biography dominates the critical discussion of his novel. And since a clear understanding of Ridge’s life story is essential in recognizing why his biography is often inadequately used when interpreting his novel, it is necessary to recount pivotal moments in Ridge’s remarkable life. The life of the first Indian novelist was marked by many significant “firsts.” Ridge was the first child of John and Sarah Ridge, the notorious couple whose courtship and wedding in Cornwall, Connecticut, inspired mobs of angry white people to riot against racial mixing.<sup>14</sup> He was the first Ridge to be given both an English and a Cherokee name at birth: John Rollin Ridge and Tsiquatalaw (which translates as Yellow Bird, the name Ridge often used as his pen name as an adult).<sup>15</sup> Ridge was born in March of 1827, a few months prior to the publication of the first Cherokee National Constitution; and Ridge’s childhood was contemporaneous with the political childhood of the modern Cherokee Nation. After his father’s death and a tumultuous adolescence, Ridge

became the first in his family to settle in California. Although he was the first Native American licensed to practice law in California, he earned his living primarily as a journalist. A respected editor and essayist, Ridge served as the founding editor of the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper. And in 1860, he became the first person to deliver a keynote commencement address at the College of California in Oakland (prior to the school's expansion and migration to Berkeley a few years later).<sup>16</sup> In 1867, after a distinguished career as a pioneering man of letters, Ridge died at the age of forty in Grass Valley, California, from "softening of the brain."

Yet in spite of all his achievements, John Rollin Ridge's life was marked with trauma and tragedy. The most significant of these traumatic events came in the summer of 1839, when Ridge's father (John Ridge), grandfather (Major Ridge), and uncle (Elias Boudinot, née Buck Watie) were assassinated by Cherokees loyal to Principal Chief John Ross. The executioners had Cherokee law on their side. The law, which was ironically committed to writing in 1829 by John Ridge himself, stated that any Cherokee who sold tribal lands to the U.S. government without majority consent of the Cherokee people would be executed.<sup>17</sup> Following the decision by the Andrew Jackson administration to ignore the Marshall Court's ruling on *Worcester v. Georgia*, the Ridges became convinced that the only means of Cherokee physical and cultural survival was to relocate west of the Mississippi River.<sup>18</sup> Thus began the heated divisions within the Cherokee Nation between the "Ridge Party" (or Treaty Party) that advocated for removal and the "Ross Party" (or National Party) that promised to remain in the traditional homelands and continue the legal resistance to removal. When the Ridges led a group of roughly twenty Cherokee leaders in signing the Treaty of New Echota in December 1835, they acted without the authority of the Ross government and they directly ignored the wishes of some 18,000 Cherokee citizens. Upon signing the treaty by candlelight, Major Ridge supposedly exclaimed, "I have just signed my death warrant."<sup>19</sup>

John Rollin Ridge was ten years old when his family purchased their own travel to the West. They took the "water route," traveling through the lush and winding rivers that feed the deep Southeast, arriving in Indian Territory in early 1838. They lived in the new country for one year before the tribal masses arrived in 1839. In comparison to the traumas experienced by the majority of Cherokee people, who made the deadly overland journey during the winter of 1838-1839, the Ridge Party endured a rather luxurious Trail of Tears. The suffering of the "uneducated" masses makes the Ridge removal experience seem at best overprivileged and, at worst, outright traitorous. It is therefore not surprising that Dr. Elizur Butler, a missionary who walked the Trail of Tears with a detachment of the main body of Cherokees, recalled a fierce anti-Ridge sentiment among the majority of Cherokees during the Trail: "*All* the suffering and *all* the difficulties of the Cherokee people [were] charge[d] to the accounts of Messrs. Ridge and Boudinot" (qtd. in Wilkins 328). Someone needed to pay for the suffering of the masses, and the Ridges were well aware that they would make that payment with their lives.<sup>20</sup>

John Rollin Ridge was twelve years old when he watched a group of masked assassins stab his father twenty-nine times in the hours before daybreak on July 22, 1839. Jace Weaver describes the killing: "They stabbed him repeatedly. They beat him. [They] took turns kicking the body, jumping up and down, caving in his chest" (qtd. in *We Shall Remain*). In an

autobiographical sketch that would later become the introduction to the posthumous volume *Poems*, Ridge describes the assassination in lingering and harrowing detail. After this detailed recollection of the stabbing, Ridge writes:

My father fell to earth but did not immediately expire. My mother ran out to him. He raised himself on his elbow and tried to speak, but the blood flowed into his mouth and prevented him. In a few moments more he died, without speaking that last word which he wished to say. Then succeeded a scene of agony the sight of which might make one regret that the human race had ever been created. It has darkened my mind with an eternal shadow. (*Poems* 6-7)

The shadow of his father's execution would follow Ridge for the remainder of his life. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the young man would begin to write creatively immediately following his father's gruesome demise. From the age of twelve until his own death at forty, writing became a means for Ridge to process the most disturbing aspects of his life. It follows that so many notable writers and critics believe that Ridge's writing process with *Joaquin Murietta*—a story oozing with excessive gore and riddled with endless cycles of violent revenge—was itself a means of therapy for the traumatized author.

Seeds of revenge were sown in Ridge's mind by the "eternal shadow" that settled after his father's assassination, giving contemporary writers and scholars ample ammunition when declaring that Ridge's personal and family traumas are the subtext of his adult literary production. Ridge's desire to assassinate Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross was a poorly kept secret, both in Cherokee country and among Ridge's friends in California. Although Ross denied accountability for the executions of Ridge's father and grandfather, it was widely believed that Ross's followers were responsible for the killings. When the Ross government pardoned any Cherokee who may have been involved in the post-Removal executions of the Ridges or Elias Boudinot, the notion of Chief Ross's complicity only hardened in John Rollin Ridge's mind. He became obsessed with revenge, evidenced by his "thinly veiled" plots to assassinate Ross, which he described in letters to his uncle Stand Watie in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>21</sup> In an 1849 essay that Ridge penned for the Clarkston (Texas) *Northern Standard*, titled "The Cherokees: Their History and Present Prospects," Ridge devotes hardly any space to a discussion of Cherokee culture or history; instead, he focuses the majority of the essay on recounting the evils of the Ross government and advocating for Ross's ouster (*A Trumpet of Our Own* 49-53).<sup>22</sup>

Plotting to kill an immensely popular Principal Chief did not help John Rollin Ridge win the hearts of many Cherokee nationals during his lifetime. Likewise, his political positions do not sit well with contemporary Cherokee nationalist scholars.<sup>23</sup> They tend to view Ridge as the embodiment of a problem that needs to be resolved. Consider the first chapter of Cherokee scholar Rennard Strickland's 1997 book, *Tonto's Revenge: Reflections on American Indian Culture and Policy*, titled "Yellow Bird's Song: The Dilemma of an Indian Lawyer and Poet." Strickland uses Ridge to frame the book, a collection of essays on various subjects that moves chronologically through the last 150 years of "Indian culture and policy," in an effort to document the move from nineteenth-century dislocation and cultural theft toward more recent developments of self-determination and reclamation. Strickland reads Ridge as an early victim of the plight of a modernized diasporic Indian in the United States. In the larger scheme of *Tonto's Revenge*, Ridge is a symbol of what we're moving away

from when we attempt to reclaim, sustain, and respect Native traditions. Strickland sympathizes with Ridge, comparing the exiled poet to his own deceased brother. Strickland's brother "had cut himself off from his traditional roots and when sustenance was needed... there was nothing to draw upon" (12). Strickland links this loss of Native roots to Ridge, suggesting that this loss is "a theme of Yellow Bird's song—we are who we are; to deny ourselves, to forget who we are—is to condemn ourselves to a spiritual, if not actual, death" (12).

When Ridge arrived in California in 1850, he was affected by the isolation from his family and his roots.<sup>24</sup> His early poetry, such as "The Harp of Broken Strings," reflects a poet who is himself broken, lonely, and still mourning. Ridge sent himself into exile in 1849 after killing, allegedly in self-defense, David Kell, a Ross partisan and Cherokee judge. If Ridge stood trial in a Cherokee court, he would have surely been executed. His mother and his uncle, Stand Watie, encouraged him to stay with his white relatives in New England. But it was 1849, and Ridge, like so many others seeking fortune or escape, was destined for California. After striking out in the mines, he began to write, scraping together a living as an editor and poet. His early poetry is mostly derivative, cultivating an "image of himself as a Cain figure, a defiant exile who is cursed with dark thoughts" (Parins 77). When the vague reports of an elusive bandit, "Joaquin," and his exploits across the state began to gain traction in the California newspapers, they must have stoked Ridge's imagination. Luis Leal asserts, "It may be that Ridge saw in Murrieta the hero who had not emerged to defend his own people" ("Introduction" xxviii). James Parins claims that "it would have been hard for John Rollin Ridge to resist setting the legend down on paper" (102). The main plot was ready-made by the actual crimes, the palpable paranoia, the corrupt state government, and the bogus "Head of Murrieta" on exhibition in San Francisco. And as Parins notes, Joaquin's career "had to appeal to Ridge's deep thirst for revenge. [...] Telling his story was natural" (102).

Ridge's thoughts during the process of writing *Joaquin Murieta* were explored by Cherokee writer Robert Conley in the short story, "The Imaginary Autobiography of Yellow Bird." The story, which opens Conley's 1988 collection, *The Witch of Goingsnake and Other Stories*, is written in first person, with Conley occupying Yellow Bird's consciousness in order to narrate the imaginary autobiography. Set in 1867, in Grass Valley, California, the story opens as Yellow Bird prepares to die. Conley writes, "The physicians have diagnosed my illness as a 'softening of the brain,' but I alone know its source." Conley suggests that Ridge's mental suffering is the product of the "eternal shadow" cast upon his mind by the execution of his father, and he claims that Ridge's father was killed by "the far greater sickness of our Nation" (26). Conley's Ridge is out of balance with Cherokee worldviews and traditions. Conley has Ridge reflect on his anguished teenage years when he writes, "I sulked by myself, read tales of high adventures, and imagined myself engaged in deadly combat with my enemies" (30). Conley frames Ridge's killing of David Kell as "my one and only chance to live out my fantasies" (30). Yet when Ridge relocates to California, "a remarkable thing happen[s]" (30); he learns about Joaquin:

There were bandits all around the state, many of them Mexican, and each of the Mexican bandits was referred to as "Joaquin." I found myself fascinated by these Joaquins. From time to time *I even imagined myself to be Joaquin.* [...] In my mind, all the



Joaquins became one, and the one became a great symbol of a kind of brown-skinned avenging angel. I conceived the character and wrote the book *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, and all the while I was engaged in this task, I was vicariously living the action. The white men of California were, in my mind, John Ross, Andrew Jackson, Wilson Lumpkin, and all the red-necks of Georgia and the Ross men of the Cherokee Nation. With my imagination and my pen I did the things I could not, or would not, do in real life but that I felt I should be doing. *Joaquin Murieta* was, for a time, my salvation. (32, emphasis added)

Conley's Ridge imaginatively *becomes Joaquin* in order to process his grief. Conley's notion that *Joaquin Murieta* enabled Ridge to vicariously enact his revenge fantasies marks the first time that a Cherokee writer used the "Joaquin-as-Ridge" construction in an attempt to bring the exiled Ridge back into the fold of Cherokee art and culture. For Conley, *Joaquin Murieta* is a grand Cherokee masquerade in which John Rollin Ridge is simultaneously the dramatist, the costume designer, and the leading actor.

Despite the tribal significance of Conley's story, it was by no means the first articulation of the "masquerade thesis" about *Joaquin Murieta*. The masquerade thesis first sees print almost fifty years earlier in Franklin Walker's 1939 study, *San Francisco's Literary Frontier*. As a seminal critic of early West Coast literature, Walker's analysis focuses much more on the concrete details in Ridge's novel than Conley's story does. Walker reads many distinctive elements of the novel as reflections of Ridge's own "experience and philosophy": Joaquin's preference for bowie knives (Ridge's favorite weapon), his mistreatment at the hands of American settlers, and his desire to avenge disenfranchisement (53). In a move that anticipates Conley's story, Walker claims that "in having Joaquin achieve his revenge by wiping out his degraders on by one, Ridge was vicariously blotting out each of the assassins who had driven their knives into the body of his father" (53). Walker's interpretation was later echoed by Joseph Henry Jackson in the introduction to the University of Oklahoma Press's 1955 reissue of *Joaquin Murieta*. Jackson claims that the novel is colored by "[i]deas of violence, sudden death," and "long cherished-revenge" which were "planted in an impressionable boy's mind" by the killing of his father (xiii). Although neither Walker nor Jackson reflect upon Ridge's book as a Native American novel, they prepared the ground upon which Native-centric applications of the masquerade thesis would grow.

Walker, Jackson, and Conley all use the masquerade thesis to find what they wanted to find in Ridge and his novel. Their work demonstrates the generative power of the Joaquin-as-Ridge argument. These writers also demonstrate the adaptability of this argument to multiple contexts: Walker uses it in an analysis of early literary production in San Francisco; Jackson uses it to make his point about the origins of the global Murieta mythology; Conley uses it to open a short story collection that aims to reflect the diversity of Cherokee people and the resilience of Cherokee traditions within the modern world. In each instance, the Joaquin-as-Ridge argument becomes a tool with which the writer is able to cultivate an extremely high-yield analysis. This is the beauty of the masquerade thesis—quite simply, it works. Regardless of the context, the *Joaquin-as-masquerade* construct *will* enable one to generate a series of interesting points about Ridge and the character he invented.

It is not surprising that the masquerade thesis would enable Louis Owens to find precisely what he wanted to find when using Ridge's novel to open his 1992 study, *Other*

*Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. As the first monograph to argue for the “Indian novel” as a distinctive and evolving genre in its own right, Owens’s work was an absolutely necessary intervention in the field of Native literary studies in the early 1990s. However, while Owens’s work has been extremely valuable and generative for the field, it also operates through an identity-obsessed methodology that is ultimately self-limiting. By analyzing Owens’s successes and shortcomings as a reader of *Joaquin Murieta*, as well as Jace Weaver’s Cherokee-centric response to Owens, I intend to demonstrate how Native-centric applications of the Ridge-as-Joaquin argument have unintentionally ghettoized the novel, limiting the potential significance of both the novel itself and the criticism it has generated.

### **Owens and Weaver on Ridge: Methodological Boundaries for a Masked Protagonist**

The vast array of American Indian identity crises has prompted volumes of scholarship that is too concerned, indeed obsessed, with Indian identity as the impetus and the endgame for Native literary studies. Identity-driven literary criticism takes many shapes in regards to Native American cultural politics. The two most prominent schools of theory are often believed to be diametrically opposed in terms of Native self-determination and political sovereignty—the “nationalist” school (Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Robert Warrior, Craig Womack, Jace Weaver) seems to emphasize group cultural identity and political sovereignty, whereas the “trickster” school (Gerald Vizenor, Louis Owens) seems to emphasize shifting contexts and malleable individual identity.<sup>25</sup> Elvira Pulitano’s controversial 2004 monograph, *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*, stoked fiery responses from Native nationalist scholars for suggesting that the hybridized and more cosmopolitan work of Owens and Vizenor is more sophisticated and essentially more evolved than the nationalist paradigms of Warrior and Womack. By arguing for a unilinear evolutionary development that begins with the nationalist school and culminates in the trickster school, Pulitano suggests that trickster theory presents a solution to the essentialist tendencies of nationalism. I counter both Pulitano and her nationalist detractors in suggesting that the two paradigms are not situated in an ascending evolutionary line. Nor are they situated in a traditionalist ceremonial circle. Rather, the trickster and nationalist paradigms are two sides of the same coin. In the process of squabbling over whose interpretations are “more authentic,” scholarship from these two camps diminishes the interpretative potential of the literature in question. Their debates, though generative, inspire an identity-obsessed critical tunnel vision. This tunnel vision ultimately relegates the literature in question to a literary ghetto, or literary reservation, wherein unempirically-determined authorial and critical “authenticity” takes precedent over the close reading of actual literary patterns like metaphor and irony. In short, the problem is that identity-based criticism of Native literatures, regardless of how “trickster” or “nationalist” it tends to be, tends to place less emphasis on the actual texts in question than it does on illusions of authorial and critical authenticity. In the pages that follow, I will analyze this problem by comparing Louis Owens’s and Jace Weaver’s applications of the masquerade thesis in their identity-based readings of *Joaquin Murieta*.

Louis Owens’s 1992 study, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, was the first scholarly monograph devoted to analyzing the Native novel. Noting the widespread

pattern of mixedblood Indian novelists producing novels with mixedblood protagonists caught between conflicting worlds, Owens envisions the history of the American Indian novel in terms of the reclamation and expression of an Indian identity by transforming a traditionally European genre into an authentically Native one.<sup>26</sup> As a result, Owens essentially makes Native authors the protagonists of his study. Owens reads *Joaquin Murieta* as a novel which “stands as fascinating testimony to the conflicts and tensions within the mixedblood author, who moves easily inside the dominant white culture but cannot forget or forgive the denigration of that culture by his indigenous self” (32). Owens argues that Ridge’s book marks the first instance of a Native novelist trying to negotiate the dialogic minefield of identity and audience, thus initiating a tradition that is evident in the works of nearly every Native novelist to follow.

For Owens, the racialized novelist is the most significant player in the conflict of an Indian novel, granting the novelist’s identity equal or even more importance than the novel’s actual characters. Owens writes, “In the beginning, the mixedblood Cherokee author John Rollin Ridge felt obligated to disguise his outrage at America’s genocidal treatment of his tribe, accomplishing this disguise by writing a novel masquerading as a biography of a California bandit” (24). Owens argues that the constraints of time, space, and anti-Indian sentiment forced Ridge to veil his personal experiences as an American Indian, so that “Ridge transforms himself and his bitterness against the oppression and displacement of Indians, becoming a haunted shapeshifter writing between the lines” (32). Asserting that *Joaquin Murieta* is “a disguised act of appropriation, an aggressive and subversive masquerade,” Owens places himself in the position of a critic who, as a diasporic mixedblood himself, is now able to read “between the lines” and reveal the closeted Indian narrative (read: Ridge’s life story) beneath the surface. To be sure, Owens’s reading of the book serves him well in the opening chapter of a book about Native writers reclaiming a Native identity through the novel.

As with his predecessors, Owens uses the masquerade thesis to find precisely what he wants to find in the novel. Owens’s argument in *Other Destinies* recognizes the notion developed by Walker, Jackson, and Conley that *Joaquin Murieta* is a subliminally anti-Ross narrative: “It does not require a leap of imagination to conclude that Ridge, having seen his people robbed of their land and heritage and having had his father, grandfather, and cousin murdered as a result, is acting out his often-sworn desire for revenge in the form of the invented bandit” (38). But Owens’s argument goes much further than simply locating Ridge’s hatred of Ross as the root of the masquerade because Owens reads Ridge himself as the masked hero of the novel. Owens likewise reads Ridge as the hidden, yet potentially subversive, hero of the process of narrative formation and textual production:

On one hand, as his publisher observes, John Rollin Ridge writes in language assimilated from the authoritative discourse of privileged “literary” America; on the other hand, the internally persuasive discourse of the oppressed and marginalized minority continually subverts the authority of the dominant discourse. As a result, like the traditional Native American trickster, the author of *Joaquin Murieta* gives ample evidence of being divided within and against himself: he embodies cultural fragmentation. (34-35)

Because Joaquin can so effectively disguise himself and elude capture, he has long been read as a kind of modern trickster. But Owens was the first scholar to suggest that the true trickster of the novel is the author, rather than the protagonist. Owens harnesses the masquerade thesis and expands it to such a degree that *everything* in and about *Joaquin Murieta* is a reflection of Ridge himself. Owens's vision of Ridge is of a would-be hero of the Native novel whose decision to hide himself in his own book was "determined by the marketplace" of a literary culture that preferred romantic adventure narratives to the autobiography of an exiled Cherokee scion (33).

Owens claims that Ridge's novel ultimately fails in its attempt to explicitly reconnect with Ridge's own indigenous identity. Ridge's failure becomes an integral premise in Owens's argument regarding the "evolution" of the Indian novel, a failure that underscores the difficult battles to be fought by the generations of writers to follow, as if they were consciously attempting to avoid the kind of dislocated masquerade evidenced by Ridge's originary bad example. In this way, Owens directly echoes Conley and Strickland, both of whom frame Ridge as a model of what can go wrong when one denies one's Native identity and culture. But Owens also reads the process of reclaiming an Indian identity as congruent with the process of transforming the genre of the novel into something explicitly Indian. Owens claims that *Joaquin Murieta* "marks the thinly camouflaged beginning of a long campaign by Native American writers to wrench a new genre—the novel—free from the hegemony of the dominant and (to Native Americans especially) destructive culture of European America" (32-33). Owens frames Ridge's failure to reconnect with his Native identity as a paradigmatic embodiment of the problem that vexes all Native novelists to follow:

Nearly a hundred years would pass before a novel written by a Native American could address the issues of injustice and genocide more directly, and even more time would pass before a work by an author recognizably Indian would gain critical acceptance. And in the novels of later generations of Indian writers, the character of the mixedblood behind the mask—Ridge himself—would move into the novel as protagonist and central concern. (40)

Thus is the crux of Owens's analysis of Ridge, and of the Native novel in general: mixedblood authors *and* protagonists want to reconnect with indigenous communities and worldviews, but the European forms must first be transformed and indigenized before such reconnection and reclamation can occur.<sup>27</sup> As always, Ridge is a good point at which to begin this inquiry because he is such an easily negative example. Due to his Western education, his family's embracing the practice of chattel slavery, his family's disconnected willingness to sell out the tribe, and the general Anglicization that characterized his entire life, John Rollin Ridge is the embodiment of the cultural and ideological colonization from which scholarship in the vein of Owens seeks liberation.

Although Owens's *Other Destinies* set the tone for Ridge scholarship from 1992 onward, with Owens's successors generally accepting his argument as self-evident, scholars operating from a framework of Native literary nationalism, such as the prominent Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver, have been skeptical. Professor Weaver is a central figure in the emergence of Native American literary nationalism. Along with Robert Warrior and Craig Womack, Weaver has helped to articulate the rationale behind the nationalist goal of

granting intellectual primacy to paradigms, cultural patterns, and political structures of Native American communities. Nationalist scholars strive to produce criticism with qualities that support Native nations and their endurance as unique and sovereign entities—what Warrior describes as “intellectual sovereignty,” what Weaver terms “communitism,” and what Womack considers the rationale for “literary separatism.”<sup>28</sup> Within a nationalist context, Native scholars have struggled to determine whether *Joaquin Murieta* is culturally affirmative or relevant to indigenous sovereignty. Indeed, the community-based ethos of “intellectual sovereignty” might seem incompatible with *Joaquin Murieta*’s concluding moral, “that there is nothing so dangerous in its consequences as *injustice to individuals*” (158). To his credit, Weaver is the only prominent nationalist scholar to attempt an analysis of Ridge’s novel. Ridge’s exclusion from Daniel Heath Justice’s otherwise exemplary study of Cherokee literatures, *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, suggests the difficulty in making space around “our fire” to seat an exiled, assimilationist, pro-slavery and fiercely contradictory character such as Ridge.

A basic tenet of Native literary nationalism is that the tribal-specific significance of Indian-made literature in English is often hidden beneath the surface of the writing. Womack’s *Red on Red* provides a model for nationalist criticism, wherein a scholar with the proper biological pedigree, community recognition, and academic training is capable of decoding the particularly indigenous elements of an Indian-made text. From this angle, Louis Owens, a scholar with Cherokee and Choctaw ancestry, should have what it takes to produce a tribally affirmative reading of *Joaquin Murieta*. But Weaver disagrees. In his 1997 monograph, *That the People Might Live*, Weaver perpetuates the reading of Ridge-as-Joaquin, but he takes this notion to a more Cherokee-specific destination. Weaver contends that Owens “overstates the case” in framing the individual mixedblood as microcosm of pantribal identity crises and campaigns to “wrench the novel free” from European hegemony (78). Weaver retracts the applicability of Owens’s argument, arguing that *Joaquin Murieta* is most appropriately decoded within a specifically Cherokee context:

[Owens] calls the novel “a disguised act of appropriation, an aggressive and subversive masquerade.” It *is* a masquerade, but not in the precise sense averred by Owens. Ridge is not mimicking the discourse of the *metropole* in order to write back to it to protest its treatment of Indians, whom he disguises as Hispanos to make it more indirect. Ridge is not protesting the treatment of Natives by Amer-Europeans at all. Rather he produces a thinly veiled revenge fantasy in which the Mexicans stand in for pro-Removal Cherokees and Anglos represent, not themselves, but *other Cherokees*—the Ross party. (*That the People Might Live* 78)

Weaver’s emphasis on what Ridge is “not” doing accentuates the tribal-centric trajectory of his retractions of the Owens argument. In the context of a monograph that seeks to demonstrate tribal consciousness and “communitism,” Weaver reads everything from an internally Cherokee perspective.

Both Weaver and Owens find what they are seeking when they decode the Native story hidden “between the lines” of Ridge’s novel. But in order to realize their own visions, they must construct certain cultural boundaries around the text in an attempt to contain and frame it according to what they hope to find. Owens is searching for evidence of an internally divided mixedblood author, and *Joaquin Murieta* renders violent cultural fissures

that Owens reads as a masquerading “psychodrama,” a projection of the author’s individualized mixedblood identity crisis and his significance as an individual-mixedblood-as-microcosm of Native experience (*Other Destinies* 40). Owens’s analysis yields the results he seeks because his analysis operates around boundaries erected between Anglo and Native cultures in general; accordingly, Owens locates the colonized mixedblood author/protagonist at the fulcrum of historical imbalance. In contrast, Weaver is seeking evidence of tribal community emphasis in Ridge’s writings. Weaver searches for Ridge’s tribal-specific relevance, rather than pan-tribal significance. Weaver therefore reads the novel’s violent cultural fissures as representative of *only* the Ross-Ridge Cherokee factional wars. Skeptical of the “footloose, rootless, mixed-blood hybridity that people too casually take away from Owens’s work, in which both everyone and no one is Indian,” Weaver rejects a hybridized pan-mixedblood argument by constructing boundaries around the Cherokee Nation itself (*American Indian Literary Nationalism* xx). Like Womack’s “red stick theory,” Weaver’s tribal-specific analysis endorses a distinct cultural identity and endorses a degree of separatism for each particular Native nation.

By examining how both Owens and Weaver construct cultural boundaries within which they decode *Joaquin Murieta*, we can discern certain shortcomings of the methodologies of the “trickster” and “nationalist” schools of Native criticism, respectively. These boundaries and methods come most sharply into view upon examining a set of peripheral Cherokee characters that play a substantive role in the novel’s plot. Unfortunately, in the zeal to make Ridge become Joaquin himself, there are few scholars who have given attention to the fact that there are Cherokees “on the surface” of the novel. Weaver, determined to find a strictly Cherokee significance to the novel’s tension between Mexicans and Anglos, completely ignores Ridge’s Cherokee characters. Recognizing these characters would destabilize the argument that *every* character in the novel is either a Ross Party or Treaty Party Cherokee in disguise. To be sure, Ridge’s “Cherokee half-breeds” are unaffiliated with either side of the Cherokee factional wars, so their existence in the novel threatens to undermine the nationalist boundaries that Weaver constructs around the novel’s symbolic potential.<sup>29</sup>

To his credit, Owens is one of the very few scholars to analyze Ridge’s Cherokee characters. Owens rightfully contrasts Ridge’s descriptions of these transplanted Cherokees with his portrayal of the Tejons and other California Natives. Unfortunately, Owens misses the point with his analysis. He believes that the indigenous Californians and the diasporic Cherokees are *both* reflections of Ridge’s fractured mixedblood consciousness. Owens reads Ridge’s rendering of these distinct Native groups as reinforcement for his thesis regarding “the complexity of the mixedblood author’s feelings” (*Other Destinies* 39):

Ridge paradoxically both embraces the racist values of his fellow Californians and protests social and racial injustice at the same time. He is divided against himself, an internal conflict further suggested in the fact that although there can be no doubt that Ridge thought California Indians to be vastly inferior to the Cherokee and other tribes to the east, he did at times defend the “Diggers” in print against Californians’ depredations. (39)

Biography notwithstanding, there is no evidence supporting the idea that Ridge saw “himself” in California Natives. And while Owens’s turn to biographical information does

help to illuminate Ridge's conflicting portrayals of Native Americans in California, it is nonetheless a drastic oversimplification of what actually occurs in the novel. Yet for a scholar operating from the mixedblood-as-trickster and individual-as-microcosm paradigm that Owens helped to found, such oversimplification is inevitable. When the default critical move is to turn away from the text in question and toward authorial biography, the interpretation that results may well gloss over the details of the text in order to present a ready-made argument, as happens with Owens's reading.

The critical squabble between Owens and Weaver illustrates the ghettoization of Native literatures by Native critics. Although they arrive at contrasting conclusions, they both work to relegate the text to a kind of literary reservation. Whether this reservation includes all Indians or whether it is Cherokee-specific makes little difference. Either way, these applications of the masquerade thesis reduce our capacity for interpreting the actual details of *Joaquin Murieta* to a bickering match over who can most authentically decode the indigenous relevance of authorial emotions cloaked by supposedly metaphorical and symbolic characters. When critics emphasize the identities of the author and the critic, they tend to de-emphasize the process of actually close reading the text itself. While such methods may work for some Native-authored texts, they are methods that simply do not suffice as a means of recognizing the actual significance of *Joaquin Murieta*. Generative though the masquerade thesis has been, if it is our only means of reading a Native significance in the first Native novel, then we will ultimately be disappointed. Fortunately, it is not.

James Cox employs a methodology that stands as a viable alternative to identity-based criticism in *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions*. Like Owens before him, Cox attempts to articulate patterns that characterize the Native novel from *Joaquin Murieta* to the late twentieth century. Cox argues that the Native American novel responds to the threats posed by European and colonialist texts. He claims that Native novelists "have always recognized that texts produced by non-Natives can be dangerous and even deadly," and he reads the "explicit textual revision of texts produced by non-Native authors" as a mode of resistance to colonization and erasure (23). By grounding his analysis in terms of textuality rather than identity, Cox is able to avoid some of the problems that surface in Owens and Weaver. Cox does acknowledge that Cherokee history in the early nineteenth century "informs the relationship Ridge's protagonist has to colonial texts and explicit Native revisions" (30). However, Cox asserts that "connections between Ridge's biography and the novel" are "less important" than "Ridge's exploration of Murieta's ability to negotiate a textual world that a hostile colonial presence tries to control" (32). As usual, Ridge's novel enables Cox's inquiry to find its desired results. Cox claims that "Ridge initiates in the Native novel tradition a critique of the way that texts function as tools of domination" (26).

Cox's study of *Joaquin Murieta* indirectly issues a call for more literal methodologies. Note that Cox does not necessarily insist upon a literal interpretation of Ridge's symbols, but rather for imaginative interpretations that do not prejudge or pre-fix Ridge's symbolism as a direct reflection of his own biography. Cox's methodology is more stable and durable than Owens's or Weaver's, and it confirms that Ridge scholarship is not doomed to total dependency on authorial biography as the key for decoding the novel. Cox reads Joaquin's

tricksteresque qualities in terms of textual control and authorship, connecting the elusiveness of Joaquin's "movement across California" with "the inability of his enemies to construct him as a textual presence with enough accuracy to threaten his freedom" (27). Although texts provide Joaquin with "an opportunity to resist the invaders," his final death and decapitation reflects Joaquin's post-1848 reality that "final authority, or authorship, rested with colonial institutions" (31). Like his predecessors, Cox here reads Ridge's novel as the manifestation of a problem to be solved, something that would finally be realized in the post-Momaday Native novel wherein final authority and authorship may well belong to Native people and institutions.<sup>30</sup>

### **Punishment and State Sanction: Ridge's Emigrant Half-Breeds and Indigenous Californians**

After decades operating under the influence of the presumption that *Joaquin Murietta* is "not about Indians," Ridge scholarship would benefit from more literal attention to the actual Native American characters in this novel. For starters, James Cox suggests that the effort to identify Joaquin's hidden Indianness is built upon a fallacy, for it elides the simple fact that "Ridge places at the center of his novel a mestizo with clear Native ancestry" (26). In the analysis that follows, I will turn my attention to the Native characters with indigenous roots within the boundaries of the United States in 1854: emigrant Cherokees and indigenous California Indians. By focusing on these characters, I intend to demonstrate several layers of Native-centric significance to this first Native novel. I hope to avoid certain quagmires of identity-based criticism by reading Ridge's explicitly Indian characters through a more literal and formalist methodology.<sup>31</sup> This analysis will reveal systems of colonial coercion and a post-colonization inclination toward hasty capitol punishment. Overall, I will reassert the value of Ridge's family history as an interpretative tool—not as the key to Ridge's coded identity crisis, but rather as a historical framework for understanding the centrality of sanctioned violence in Ridge's novel itself and in Ridge's connection to the Murrieta archive that he initiated.

Appropriately, the first Native American characters to appear in *Joaquin Murietta* are California Indians. Joaquin's band encounters these anonymous "Indians" in the forests of Humboldt County in late 1851. The bandits have "induced" the Indians to help them steal some horses from nearby Americans, but the raid is unsuccessful (Ridge, *Joaquin* 26). Ridge writes, "so efficiently did these simple people render their service" that the Anglos set out to avenge their losses by targeting the Natives (26). A skirmish ensues, and several Indians are killed. While the scene is brief, it portrays Native American characters being coerced into taking sides in warfare between Mexicans and Americans. Most importantly, the scene also portrays Natives becoming targets of retaliatory killings.

This early scene in Humboldt County sets in motion a pattern that *Joaquin Murietta's* Native characters inevitably fall into: inducement and coercion to participate in the warfare between Mexicans and Americans. While the Indians in Humboldt are enlisted on the Mexican side, Ridge amplifies the themes of Native bodies as objects of colonial conscription when Joaquin's band travels to Southern California and encounters a group of



Tejon Indians. The Tejons are led by a “Chief Sapatarra.”<sup>32</sup> Like the Indians in Humboldt County, Sapatarra’s group is expected to take sides in the fighting between Mexicans and Americans. However, unlike the Indians in Humboldt, these Tejons are recruited as agents of the United States. Within this context, it is significant that the Tejons are the only people in the entire novel who capture Joaquin alive. After being tipped off by the Americans and induced to help catch the bandits, the Tejons manage to capture Joaquin and his men without much effort. This is monumental. They trick the tricksters. They rob the robbers, taking all of the bandits’ clothes, their weapons, and a total of \$10,000. The narrator notes that “Never were men so completely humiliated. The poor, miserable, cowardly Tejons had achieved a greater triumph over them than all the Americans put together!” (38).

Understandably, Ridge’s phrase about these “poor, miserable, cowardly Tejons” is one that generally bothers critics. According to Karl Kroeber, the scene is “a passage of scathing ridicule of California Indians that sounds like Twainian racism” (6). I would likewise find the phrase to be evidence of Ridge’s own prejudice, if not for the remainder of the sentence, wherein the Indians achieve “a greater triumph ... than all the Americans put together!”

Though his Tejon characters remain semantically veiled behind stereotypical images of Indian degeneracy, Ridge is careful to simultaneously elevate the capacity of these California Indians above that of the Americans. The Tejons then contact a judge in Los Angeles County about their captives, but the ignorant Judge dismisses their message, believing that the Tejons are complaining about some little “feud” between themselves and the “greasers” (39). The pervasiveness of American ignorance and the ineptness of American bureaucracy fall in Joaquin’s favor. The Tejons lead the bandits to a small clearing in the woods, where the bandits assume they are about to be executed. Instead, the bandits are tied to trees, flogged, and humiliated once more. For these California Indian characters, humiliation is clearly the punishment of choice. And it works. Joaquin’s band, sent naked into the forest after the Tejons release them, laughs heartily at the experience. When some of the bandits discuss getting revenge on Sapatarra, Joaquin orders that no one should harm the Tejon leader or his people. In Joaquin’s mind, it seems, the humiliation was nobler than imprisonment or execution.

Ridge’s portrayal of Joaquin’s encounter with the Tejons is important for a Native reading of the novel for two primary reasons. First is the sum of money the Tejons confiscate from Joaquin, and second is the notion of the wilderness as source of renewal and rebirth. Regarding the money, Joaquin’s missing \$10,000 surfaces again, albeit rather subtly. Nearly halfway through the novel, the narrator describes a memorable scene in Stockton. Joaquin walks up to a “Wanted” poster that has his name on it, the poster offering a \$5,000 reward for his capture, dead or alive. Joaquin takes out a pencil and writes on the poster: “I will give \$10,000 Joaquin” (68). He then quickly slips away and never returns to Stockton without a disguise. This scene is one of the most famous scenes of the entire *Murrieta* archive. James Cox writes, “*Murrieta*’s addition to the notice is both a conventional boast and an assertion of authority by a marginalized voice within a narrative intended to facilitate his death anticipates the extensive revisions of colonial narratives by Ridge’s literary descendents” (29).<sup>33</sup> Additionally, Ridge’s novel frames this colonial revision in a wryly indigenous context through Joaquin’s capture by Sapatarra’s Tejons. Consider the implication of Joaquin offering \$10,000 for his own capture. Indeed, he has already been

captured once, and left alive. Joaquin indirectly declares that he has already paid the reward for his own capture, a sum paid when the Tejons robbed the robbers of their \$10,000.

Perhaps the bandits paid the Tejons this exorbitant sum for their “rebirth” within the Edenic space of preindustrial North America. John Lowe, whose analysis of *Joaquin Murietta* emphasizes Joaquin’s capacity to “master space,” writes:

when Joaquin’s band, men and women alike, are stripped naked by the Tejons, the men find new clothing but the women hide themselves in the brush “like mother Eve”; the phrase points both to the regenerative nature all around them and to the parallels between their retreats and the Garden of Eden / mythical quest. (113)

Lowe’s reading hints toward the settler fantasies of rebirth, regeneration, and renewal in the American “wilderness” that have long fueled Eurowestern colonization.<sup>34</sup> The notion that colonists are “reborn” within Edenic space seems applicable to Ridge’s description of the bandits as they were released from their captivity among the Tejons: “They went forth into the wilderness as naked as on the day that they were born” (*Joaquin* 39). Ridge literalizes the metaphor of their rebirth by their nakedness; and in conjunction with his references to “Mother Eve” and Milton’s “naked majesty” (*PL* IV 288-293), Ridge likewise implies an Edenic spiritual rebirth as well, albeit an extremely ironic one. A common trope in narratives of American expansion and the colonial occupation of Native spaces is the notion articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner, wherein “the wilderness masters the colonist” as a prelude to a transformation yielding “a new product that is American” (4). In *Going Native*, Shari Huhndorf delineates the settler fantasies articulated by Turner’s argument, critiquing Turner’s implication that “colonists went native in order to establish their domination over the Indians and the wilderness” (56). Ridge’s Mexican and American characters both follow the pattern Huhndorf describes, but Joaquin’s engagement with the Tejons subverts this colonial trope in several ways. In an ironic twist that both prefigures and parodies this return-to-the-garden trope, Ridge portrays immigrant characters who, rather than experiencing a naturalistic spiritual renewal in a depopulated space, are instead robbed and humiliated. Rather than achieve domination, the bandits are swindled. Ridge’s parody of the American “frontier” as rejuvenating garden suggests that the very concept of rebirth-through-occupation of the wilderness is itself a swindle. While there is clearly a Native significance to this scene, it is subtle enough to be missed when attempting to decode the text with identity-driven methodological blinders.

Ridge’s indigenous Californians present stark counterpoints to the Cherokee characters that come later in the novel, particularly in terms of “legal” sanction for retributory violence. The novel twice refers to these Cherokee characters as “Cherokee half-breeds.” They live in an area named “Cherokee Flat,” which seems to be the present-day ghost town of Cherokee, California, located in the foothills north of Oroville and east of Chico. The reader first meets these Cherokees during an encounter with the American Captain Ellas, who informs them that the Mexican outlaws are nearby. After pursuing the bandits for some time, Ellas trails them into the mountains. The Americans leave the Cherokees and move into the hills, where they come upon a Mexican person. The narrator describes this Mexican as peripheral and noncombative: “This individual was not a ‘fighting member,’ but rather a sly and secret friend who had volunteered to take care of one of

Joaquin's wounded men who had been hit in the skirmish at Chaparral Hill the day before" (123). Captain Ellas has his soldiers arrest the wounded man and take him to Cherokee Flat to hold him overnight. Leaving their prisoner with the Cherokees, the Americans move out in pursuit of the "fighting" bandits who traveled higher up in the hills. The Cherokees, however, do not wait for the Americans to return. They hang the Mexican. Ridge writes:

The wounded man being a trouble upon their hands, and, no doubt, being entertained as to his character, the Cherokee half-breeds and others at the Cherokee House concluded to hang him, a very necessary ceremony which was soon performed (124).

Why do they hang him? The man was no danger to the Cherokees. The narrator's comment about necessity seems like typical Ridge doubleness. This man was a medic, not a soldier. He might have been more useful to the Cherokee community alive than dead. However, the Cherokees not only seem to ally themselves with the Americans until the end, they also seem incapable of entertaining an option other than execution.

This hasty move to execution might well speak to the novel's "lesson" that "that there is nothing so dangerous in its consequences as *injustice to individuals*" (158). The hasty execution perpetuates the cycle of injustice. Regardless of his own Cherokee-centric chauvinism, Ridge does not cast the Cherokees in a particularly favorable light. The hanged man was tangential to both the main plot and the main warfare. Like the Cherokees themselves, this man was peripheral, a nameless character who momentarily slips from the margins into the narrative's central focus. These peripheral characters are treated as pawns within larger systems of oppression fostered by American "nativism" and the racist economy of post-1848 California. Although peripheral, these Cherokee half-breeds are pivotal elements of the plot. As agents of the Anglophone enterprise, their actions enable the American soldiers to focus on Joaquin. They seem somewhat autonomous within the hierarchy of the Anglophone society, operating with the agency to execute. Their agency suggests a model of Cherokee interaction within the U.S. government that Ridge himself envisioned. Unlike his father and his grandfather, who always regarded the Cherokee Nation as a political entity separate from the United States, John Rollin Ridge envisioned the Cherokee Nation eventually becoming its own state.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps his rendering of this autonomous diasporic Cherokee community projects his conception of how a U.S.-Cherokee political relationship through federation could benefit the "national security" of the Anglo society.

While Ridge's Cherokee half-breeds may seem to endorse the notion of Cherokee autonomy within an American system, they clearly pose problems to Ridge's valuation of individualized justice. These problems surface near the end of the novel when U.S. agents again solicit Cherokee military assistance. Captain Ellas enlists "a number of Cherokees ... to go out and way-lay the different trails between Bear Mountain and San Domingo Range, to which they readily assented" (127). By assenting so "readily," it seems that Ridge's Cherokee characters have few caveats about serving as henchmen for the Americans. "A Mexican" is soon captured and taken back to Cherokee Flat. This Mexican character is like the Mexican previously executed by Cherokees, and also like the Cherokee half-breeds themselves, for he does not have a name. After the man confesses that he knows Joaquin

and the bandits, the Americans cannot decide what to do with him. Captain Ellas is not sure if the man should be executed, so he leaves it up to the Cherokees. Ridge writes:

Ellas left him in charge of the two Cherokee half-breeds with the request that they would give a good account of him, whereupon the crowd dispersed. At about twelve o'clock in the night, the Cherokees went to Ellas's house in San Andreas and informed him that they were ready to give 'a good account' of the Mexican. Nothing more was said on the subject, and the next day, he was found hanging on a tree by the side of the road. (128)

Once again we see Cherokees performing midnight executions. It would seem that Ridge's Cherokees are incapable of entertaining the idea that capital punishment is problematic. These characters and their executions are the novel's closest approximations to the cold justice described in Ridge's poem, "Mount Shasta," which Ridge pastes into the early pages of the novel in its entirety. The Cherokee half-breeds have "subdued" their "human passion," they are impervious to "pity's tears," and they appear overeager to apply the strong arm of justice (*Joaquin* 24, 25). In their efforts to put Ridge's configuration of natural law and justice into action, they enact "injustice to individuals."

The Cherokees and the California Indians in *Joaquin Murieta* seem to have diametrically opposed senses of justice. They also occupy opposite positions within the narrative. The California Indians appear roughly thirty pages into the novel, whereas the Cherokees appear roughly thirty pages before the end. The California Native sequences are set in coastal forests; the Cherokee sequences are set in the mining hills. Perhaps most importantly, unlike the Tejons, who signal an ironically humorous "rejuvenating" excursion into Edenic space, these Cherokees suggest the opposite. As the executioners of Mexicans, the Cherokee half-breeds signal the narrative's turn toward its conclusion and the inevitable execution of Joaquin himself. Their presence triggers the realization of the transcontinental American empire. Unlike the Miltonic "naked majesty" Ridge bestows upon Sapatarra, these Cherokee half-breeds are Indians post-Fall. The Cherokees use their military prowess to serve as agents of death and eminent doom for Joaquin's band. At the same time, the Cherokees contribute to American "progress" by assisting in the hunt for Joaquin. From a Cherokee nationalist perspective, one could use Ridge's novel to argue for the devastating effects, both externally and internally, of acquiescing to American ideology and colonial practice. Indeed, such a reading would challenge the all-too-typical nationalist perception of the Ridges as assimilationists who lacked concern for the potentially self-destructive effects of internalizing American ideology.

Ultimately, whereas Sapatarra takes the high road and chooses to humiliate rather than execute, the Cherokees execute without deliberation. The punitive actions taken by these two groups of American Indians are polarized reflections of each other, as pictured through Ridge's assimilationist lens. From a surface reading, one might easily conclude that Ridge's Cherokees, as assimilated American agents, present the author's own ideals of a civilized American Indian group, as if Ridge sees the Cherokees on top of a hierarchical ladder which the Tejons could eventually climb. However, given the novel's doubled language and imagery, its continual contradiction of itself, I find it hard to believe that Ridge's Cherokees are necessarily more admirable characters than his California Indians. Both characters lack something substantial—the California Indians lack a modern economy,

and the Cherokees lack humor and empathy. Both reflect a profound sense of loss: the California Indians' loss of land and power, and the Cherokees' loss of respect for individual circumstances. Neither presents an ideal; rather, both embody the damage caused by shock waves from the colonial quake.

Whereas the masquerade thesis reads Native American characters as the underlying plot of *Joaquin Murrieta*, a more literal analysis of the novel's Cherokees and California Indians places explicitly Native sequences on the plot's periphery. While such a reading fails to align Ridge with subsequent Native novelists whose central plots move through Native characters and communities, it nonetheless reflects a motif informed by Native experience and Cherokee-specific significance. Simply put, violent retaliation against injustice is a problem. As with everything in scholarship on John Rollin Ridge, this critique of violent retaliation speaks to the execution of his father. It speaks to the cycles of violence inherent in the post-Removal Cherokee factional war that continued through the American Civil War, a traumatic intratribal breach that weighed heavy on Ridge's conscience and lingers still in the Cherokee tribal consciousness. Yet these facts alone do not necessarily discredit the potency or the viability of the masquerade thesis. They merely demonstrate how the novel's tribal-specific significance is not only hidden between the lines. It is, indeed, directly on the surface. In this way, the novel's tribal significance is very much like Joaquin himself, who, as Ridge writes, was "disguised the most when he showed his real features" (30-31).

Identity-based critical methodology poses problems not because it necessarily gets it wrong. But as I have contended, such methodology can only determine a fraction of the true significance of literary art, Indian-made or otherwise. The true significance of *Joaquin Murrieta* is not dependent upon the degree to which Joaquin himself is a federally recognized American Indian. The fact that scholars are even able to make Ridge himself "become Joaquin," and the fact that we can so easily believe ourselves when we reach that conclusion, is testament to the enduring malleability of the iconic narrative contraption that Ridge invented with his *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murrieta*. Ridge's significance as novelist is that he passed off a work of outrageous fiction as verifiable state history, ironically doing precisely what he aims to do: "to contribute my mite to those materials out of which the early history of California shall one day be composed" (*Joaquin* 7). Luis Leal articulates Ridge's achievement with grander language, asserting that the book gave birth to the "only California hero at the level of art, history, and myth" (Leal, Introduction xcvi). Yes, there is most certainly a Cherokee subtext to the novel, and this subtext subliminally endures the appropriation and canonization of Ridge's narrative by early California historians such as Hubert H. Bancroft and Theodore Hittel. The Cherokee "artifacts" that mine the cultural and historical symbolism of Ridge's text become masked cultural nuggets lurking latent within the archive. Contemporary scholarship should not be dependent upon the masquerade thesis when attempting to unearth these nuggets, to pan them out from the illusions that constitute the Murrieta archive. Furthermore, these Cherokee artifacts are not meant to enact tribal sovereignty nor to initiate the Native American novel tradition. Rather, they are simply meaningful threads in the larger tapestry of the global Murrieta mythos.

My critique of identity-based interpretive methodology does not mean to dismiss the value of a thorough familiarity with Ridge family history when analyzing the significance of Ridge's novel as the origin point of both the Native novel tradition and the Murrieta archive.

As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, patterns of violent revenge and culturally sanctioned violence dominate Murrieta narratives. It is no secret that the Treaty of New Echota was the document used by the U.S. government to sanction the Trail of Tears. Likewise, it was invoked by John Ridge's killers as the evidence of treason that granted cultural sanction to the execution. The Treaty of New Echota sanctioned a cycle of retaliatory violence that lasted for decades. When we read Ridge's emigrant Cherokees in relation to federally sanctioned executions, it does not require a leap of imagination to see reflections of the Treaty of New Echota and its fallout. More pointedly, the mindlessness with which Ridge's Cherokee characters execute relatively innocent Mexicans implies that the entire Ross-Ridge fissure sprung from a similar degree of mindlessness and dehumanization. This reading contrasts directly with the notion of the novel's anti-Ross subtext, as claimed by Conley, Owens, and Weaver. Indeed, it seems that Ridge's Cherokee characters, as they repeatedly violate Ridge's concluding moral, deconstruct the legitimacy of either position within the Cherokee factional war. Such a posture conflicts with Ridge's stated distaste for Ross, but it also endorses the notion that Ridge's writing process became a means of working through his feelings and attempting to recover balance.

The significance of textuality, mortality, and impersonality as key elements in the tormented early history of the modern Cherokee Nation cannot be overstressed.<sup>36</sup> When we cast our scholarly glances back upon early nineteenth-century Cherokee history, what do we see? We see nationalism constructed through documentation, yet these documents represent only a small ruling class rather than the will of the majority.<sup>37</sup> We see paper promises exposed as disingenuous, promises in word that are repeatedly broken in deed. We see the possibility, indeed the probability, that texts will at best purvey falsehoods and at worse sanction genocide through printed lies. We see textuality as a primary mode of asserting control within the modern and rapidly modernizing world. We also see textuality as something easily dismissible when it conflicts with the interests of an oppressive regime. We see laws, interpretations of laws, and final decisions written by the highest court in the United States, all authored under the pretext of protecting those who lack protection but ultimately absent of any substantial ability to effect change. We see, time and time again, "national" documents composed to perpetuate illusions of solidarity grafted upon a reality of divisive diversity. And when we cast our modern glances back to 1854, to a twenty-seven year-old John Rollin Ridge sitting down to write *Joaquin Murieta*, we can easily imagine him weaving all of these tropes into the tapestry of the Murrieta narrative itself.

### **The Legacy of the First Native Novel: Ridge's Literary Achievements with *Joaquin Murieta***

Considering the implications of Rennard Strickland's claim that the "tragic events" of Ridge's life can so often "obscure his achievements," it seems necessary to look past the haze of biography-driven criticism and recognize Ridge's true achievement with *Joaquin Murieta* (*A Trumpet of Our Own* 10). Ridge's influence reaches well beyond the boundaries of Ridge's own lifetime. Yet Ridge's novel is not the conscious beginning of the Native American novel tradition. Ridge is the first Native novelist by chance, not by design, but his

novel has a national and global significance well beyond its status as Indian-made. What Ridge gave to the world was, simply, “Joaquin Murrieta.” Ridge created the mold from which all future incarnations of Murrieta’s narrative would spring. Ridge’s character is built for the generations. Ridge’s Murrieta is malleable to the point of universality, his contradictions dense and yet portable.

While Ridge’s role in the creation of the character was largely forgotten until the mid-twentieth century when his literary legacy exhumed in an “ethnographic salvage operation” (Owens, *Train* 221), Joaquin Murrieta nonetheless lived on and accreted an undeniable global significance. In the years following the publication of Ridge’s book, Murrieta’s fictional biography would evolve into the narrative of “the paradigmatic folk hero” for Latinos by “representing their extreme frustration at the oppressive laws that targeted them” (Herrera-Sobek, *Chicano Folklore* 11). Murrieta’s fictional blood would serve as the paradigmatic manifestation of the *frontera* metaphor articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa, wherein the “third world grates up against the first and bleeds” (*Frontera* 25). Today, Ridge’s character has become, in the words of Luis Leal, “the greatest popular hero of the Chicano in California” (Introduction lxxvii). Murrieta’s story has been told thousands of times, and each revisitation has been shaped by Ridge’s series of fictional events that transform Murrieta from a peaceful immigrant into an avenging trickster.

Ridge designed the hero to ensnare his various audiences and encourage them to “become Joaquin.” If Ridge’s audiences did not become Joaquin himself, they were at least forced to reckon with the question of whether they could “become like Joaquin” if they suffered as he did. *Joaquin Murieta* demonstrates Ridge’s play with subjectivity, textuality, and sanctioned violence as a means to incarnate a character with an alluring and elusive persona. Evidenced by the evolution of the Murrieta persona in the generations to follow Ridge, it is undeniable that Murrieta’s subjectivity is unique in comparison to similar Anglophone or Latino folk heroes. Ridge constructed Joaquin so that people would imagine themselves as Joaquin. For example, “El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta,” a Mexican folk ballad that has been evolving since the 1850s, is unlike any other folk song in the English or Spanish language traditions. In the Murrieta corrido, the singer assumes the persona of the heroic character. This simply does not happen in the case of anyone except Joaquin Murrieta. Traditionally, whether in English or Spanish, the folk singer occupies an anonymous “I” who represents an “everyman” participating in events with national and global significance; or the singer uses the first-person singular perspective to narrate the life of a famous hero. In this, Joaquin Murrieta is a transnational and transgenerational narrative phenomenon unlike anything else in Europe or the Americas.

I will explore the process of “becoming Joaquin” in the next chapter by analyzing the character’s evolution from Ridge through the Mexican corrido and into Rodolfo Gonzales’s epic Chicano persona. To conclude this chapter, we should remember that as a relatively blank canvas upon which each successive author/storyteller projects personal desires and inclinations, Ridge’s Joaquin becomes whoever you want him to be. This is precisely why Nativist literary scholars have been able to make the case that the action in *Joaquin Murieta* is a masquerade for Ridge’s revenge fantasies. Ridge’s character allows viewers to see whatever they want to see. Consider Weaver and Owens as examples of millennial critics who found in *Joaquin Murieta* precisely what their studies required them to find. In general, if readers

want to see an image of Ridge himself between the lines, they will have no problems doing so. One need not scour the archive too deeply to find connections between Ridge-the-author and Joaquin-the-hero: the suave countenance, the dark but ethnically ambiguous appearance, the ability to walk in two worlds, the unlikely depth of their educations, the enigmatic personality and shadowy demeanor, the family traumas and terminal desires for revenge. The more one looks, the more one is bound to find. The trick is that this same dynamic holds true regardless of what one is looking for.

I must mention one more gem in Ridge's string of achievements with *Joaquin Murrieta*: the novel molded the archetype of the original West Coast hero.<sup>38</sup> In addition to being the first Native novel, *Joaquin Murrieta* is also the first Anglophone novel printed on the Pacific Coast of North America. In addition, it is the first novel in any language to narrate the racialized brutality resulting from the U.S.-Mexican War. Unlike his folkloric American peers who endorse and enact Manifest Destiny, Joaquin Murrieta fights back. Jackson compares Joaquin to John Henry, Paul Bunyan, and Johnny Appleseed. But Jackson fails to note the substantive differences between these cultural icons. Murrieta's ethos in opposition to the expansive American "machine" differentiates him from his Eastern and Midwestern peers in the pantheon of American folk heroes. John Henry bests "the machine," but he promptly dies with his hammer in his hand, demonstrating, while laying the rails that catalyze the settlement and colonization of the transcontinental American empire, the post-racial potential of human strength. Paul Bunyan and Johnny Appleseed likewise embody the westward progress of the American machine: clearing the land for colonial use and distributing the chosen genes for cultivation, respectively. But when the westwardly expanding American machine reaches the Pacific Coast, the Mexican public is excluded from the supposedly inclusive American public, disregarding the fact that the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo granted equal rights of citizenship to former Mexican nationals. Joaquin Murrieta, an original West Coast hero, embodies the negative fallout of the praxis of colonial exclusion inherent to American westward expansion. Murrieta is disenfranchised; he is victimized; and he seeks vengeance against the agents of an imported American racism that has bent his body and his mind. He steals and subverts power. He undermines colonial authority and manipulates imperialist legal systems through his bilingual fluency. And, of course, he rides the biggest, blackest, fastest horse imaginable. Murrieta evolves (via Zorro) into Batman, just as John Henry evolves into Superman.<sup>39</sup>

The great achievement of the first Native American novel is that it gave birth to a new trickster, one who conquered the world. Although Ridge's character is clearly derivative of European narratives (William Wallace, Robin Hood, Rob Roy, Rinaldo Rinaldini, Jack Sheppard, etc.), the unprecedented social context of the California Gold Rush made him a "novel" character, something familiar yet completely new. We should remember this achievement when we consider which critical methodologies are most useful for evaluating the novel's significance. To be sure, *Joaquin Murrieta* cannot compete with of D'arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* or Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* in terms of literary artistry. Unlike Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* or James Welch's *Fools Crow*, Ridge's novel will never be an object of pride for scholarship determined to endorse Native sovereignty and self-determination. And while it has proven useful for Americanists intending to diversify the mainstream canon, *Joaquin Murrieta* will never supplant Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* or Melville's



*Moby Dick* as a pinnacle of the American novel in the 1850s. Yet Ridge did achieve something that few literary luminaries have done. He produced a hero for the ages. Without Ridge's book, there is no narrative body to connect with the ominous "Head of Joaquin Murrieta." There is no epic persona to embody the Chicano movement in the late 1960s. There is no "lonely rider, hack[ing] out a path to replenish our honor" (Neruda 127). There is no original mold of the "California Eros" (Rodriguez 139). There is no singular body of the only "Californian hero at the level of art, history, and myth."

In the final analysis, the first Native American novel is an achievement that cannot be fully appreciated when the novel is interpreted with methodologies predetermined to construct a literary reservation around its symbolism. Yet if Ridge must ultimately "become Joaquin" in order to reveal his link to more contemporary Native novelists, then so be it. If so, then Ridge is merely arriving late to his own party. For 160 years, poets and singers have been "becoming Joaquin." We might as well celebrate this phenomenon from a tribal perspective. For in its unsettling of the methods of identity-based criticism, *Joaquin Murrieta* demonstrates something of great importance to Nativist scholars and literary critics: that if we can read beyond the self-imposed and theoretical ghettos spawned by our identity crises and inclinations toward political separatism, we will be able to better analyze the value of Native American literature on the world stage. Ridge proves this, whether we like it or not.

## Chapter Two

### “I am Joaquin!”: Murrieta’s Absent Body and the Evolution of a Literary Persona

Yes, Seniorita, I *am* a man. I was once as noble a man as ever breathed, and if I am not so now, it is because men would not allow me to be as I wished. (Ridge, *Joaquin Murrieta* 106)

I come from nothing.  
Of nothing I am made, that’s why I am (Elizondo, “Murrieta, Dos” 65)

Joaquin Murrieta is entirely unlike most folk heroes because the process of telling Murrieta’s story is often the process of *becoming Joaquin Murrieta*. This act of becoming Joaquin Murrieta—the core idea of this dissertation—is a strikingly unique characteristic of the Murrieta archive, yet it has received hardly any scholarly attention. For example, while some Chicano scholarship on Rodolfo Gonzales’s poem, *I Am Joaquin*, addresses issues of the poem’s “radical subjectivity” (Arteaga 147), this subjectivity is generally seen in relation to the Chicano movement and the evolution of a Chicano identity in the late-twentieth century rather than in relation to the larger Murrieta archive. My purpose in this chapter is not to theorize Murrieta’s subjectivity in regards to racialized status or consciousness but rather to explicate and interpret the significance of the radical tendency for those who sing the songs of Murrieta to assume Murrieta’s persona in the process. The unique process of “becoming Joaquin” comes into sharper relief when compared to the absence of such dynamics in the lyrical archives of other folk icons. For example, when one tells the story of William Wallace or Robin Hood, one does not become these characters. Stephen Knight’s 2003 monograph, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*, analyzes a great range of songs about Robin Hood, and not a single one is narrated from the first-person perspective of the hero. Some songs are narrated by other characters common to the mythology, such as Maid Marian, but none by Robin Hood himself. Likewise, recent scholarship on William Wallace reveals several traditional lyrics about the Scottish hero’s life, all of them narrated from a third-person perspective.<sup>40</sup>

To be sure, not everyone who tells Murrieta’s story becomes Joaquin. Most of the Anglophone versions, such as the Ridge novel and the various *California Police Gazette* spin-offs, follow the model of William Wallace and Robin Hood narratives in that they do not involve the narrator explicitly becoming Joaquin. For example, Joseph E. Badger’s sensational dime novels of the 1880s certainly do not entail Badger donning the mask of the hero himself. But the curious case of Cincinnatus Miller, one of Badger’s contemporaries, warrants consideration. Miller was an American poet who traveled to California during the Gold Rush era, became enthralled by the state’s majestic topography and romanticized history, and eventually appropriated a Californian consciousness by literally “becoming

Joaquin.” Miller would publish his work under the pen name “Joaquin Miller.” Miller’s poem, “Californian,” recounts and embellishes Murrieta’s tragic romance, and though the poem is lyrically mediocre and formally derivative, it provided the poet with a vehicle for reinventing himself. The literary career of “Joaquin Miller” demonstrates the unique pattern that distinguishes the Murrieta archive: the tendency for writers and singers to identify with and ultimately assume the subject-position of the folk hero himself, thus *becoming Joaquin Murrieta*.

The subjectivity of the Murrieta corrido is unlike any of its cousins on either side of the U.S.-Mexican border, as well as the transatlantic Anglophone and Hispanophone traditions, in that the act of singing the corrido is the means by which one metaphorically becomes Joaquin Murrieta, the hero himself.<sup>41</sup> The tradition of becoming Joaquin is most apparent in borderlands Hispanophone traditions of the Spanish-language Murrieta. This pattern is most pronounced in the Mexican folk ballad, “El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta.” Sometimes titled “Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta” or simply “Joaquin Murrieta,” the origins of the corrido date to approximately 1853, the year of Murrieta’s supposed execution and decapitation.<sup>42</sup> The Murrieta corrido stands alone as the only corrido wherein the singer actually becomes the hero and assumes the hero’s persona.<sup>43</sup> Other corridos fall into two general categories: first-person narratives from the perspective of an anonymous everyman who participates in a memorable and significant experience, or third-person narratives about the lives of folk heroes such as Gregorio Cortez or Pancho Villa. In contrast, the Murrieta corrido is entirely unique as a first-person narrative from the perspective of the hero himself. The subjectivity of the Murrieta corrido is also unlike traditional North American folk ballads in English, which tend to fall into the same general pattern as the corrido: they are stories told from the perspective of either a first-person anonymous everyman or a third-person narrator who recounts the life of a heroic figure. For example, the first-person everyman describes the experience of the masses in “Muleskinners Blues” or “Erie Canal,” while the third-person narrator recounts and commemorates the life of Joe Hill or Jesse James.

The significance of Murrieta’s unique subjectivity in the musical archives becomes particularly clear when the corrido is compared with the most famous of all American folk songs, the ballad of “John Henry.” Like Joaquin Murrieta, John Henry suffered severe racial discrimination in Anglo America. As Scott Reynolds Nelson explains in his 2006 study, *Steel Drivin’ Man*, John Henry was born into slavery in Virginia and imprisoned after the Civil War. In the early 1870s, John Henry was sent with a detachment of other prisoners to labor in the construction of railroad tunnels through the dense mountains that separate Virginia and West Virginia. When faced with a competition to see whether a steam-powered drill could lay more railroad track than a human spike driver, John Henry stood up and accepted the challenge. Heroically, John Henry bested the machine, using only his hands and his hammer to lay fourteen feet of track in comparison to the steam drill’s nine feet. However, exhausted from the effort, John Henry promptly died afterward. Although his feats stand as testimony to human strength and capacity, John Henry’s death also serves as a warning to other laborers about the futility of attempting to best the machine. Ironically, John Henry’s death affirms human strength in the face of mechanization while simultaneously participating in and glorifying the work of laying the tracks for transcontinental American

empire. In contrast, the story of Joaquin Murrieta serves as the West Coast cousin to the East Coast paradigm inherent in John Henry's story. John Henry embodies a panhuman desire to outdo "the machine"; yet his story vindicates the expansive trajectory of the American cultural machine even while critiquing it. In contrast, Joaquin Murrieta, whose blood is emblematic of the dismembered Mexican body politic post-California statehood, embodies the violently exclusive nature of the expansive American machine. Whereas John Henry ultimately serves the westward "progress" of the cultural machine, Joaquin Murrieta chooses to fight back against the discriminatory nature of just such "progress." Although both John Henry and Joaquin Murrieta resist and die as a consequence of their resistance, John Henry's resistance to machine power romanticizes the sweat of American expansion, whereas Joaquin Murrieta's resistance to state power romanticizes armed struggle against American expansion.

Comparing Joaquin Murrieta to John Henry demonstrates an important connection between first-person subjectivity and the capacity to articulate resistance to expansive American hegemony. John Henry's story has been sung in both the first-person and the third-person. When "The Ballad of John Henry" is sung in the third-person, as it is in the Carl Sandburg/Pete Seeger tradition, an omniscient narrator recounts the most salient details of John Henry's life and death. When the John Henry story is sung in first-person, as it is in Mississippi John Hurt's "Spike Driver Blues," the first-person narrator is one of Henry's anonymous co-workers, another spike-driver who quits his job after watching the powerful John Henry die as a result of challenging the machine, taking "his hammer to the captain" and declaring that the hammer "won't kill me."<sup>44</sup> While these two traditional points-of-view concerning John Henry's story involve several variations and reinterpretations, never has "John Henry" been sung in a fashion wherein the singer assumes the persona of John Henry and claims to be he himself. As a result, the great American folk hero never gets to tell his own story through his song. Perhaps if he did, he would rail against the system that carried him to Big Bend Tunnel in the first place. But John Henry's song, like that of every North American folk icon other than Murrieta, is always sung from the perspective of someone else. This point-of-view serves to contain and pre-empt the subversive potential inherent to the John Henry narrative. As Nelson reports, John Henry's anti-establishment potential is evidenced in his various twentieth-century appropriations. For example, John Henry was transformed into a communist "strongman" in the early twentieth-century, an embodiment of the strength of the laboring masses. He was also transformed into a Black Nationalist hero in the late-1960s, an embodiment of the abuses done to Black bodies in America. Even in these decidedly anti-establishment contexts, however, John Henry's inability to sing his own song facilitates his appropriation and ultimate submission to the paradigms into which he is incorporated. He becomes what Michel Foucault terms a "docile body," subject to the manipulations of the cultural machinery of invasive American paradigms, even if those paradigms sheathe themselves in the rhetoric of an anti-establishment ethos (136).

John Henry's inability to tell his own story ensures that while the machine itself may be demonized, the process of creating the infrastructure that facilitates American "Manifest Destiny" becomes normalized. Joaquin Murrieta, in contrast, resists incorporation. Murrieta's family is abused by racist Americans, prompting him to strike back against both

the machinery of American expansion and its Anglo agents. Because the singer becomes Joaquin, the corrido explicitly reminds its audience of Murrieta's visceral distaste for American racism. In doing so, he stands up to the system in a way that John Henry never can. Not surprisingly, John Henry, the ex-slave turned icon of human potential, is the king of American folk heroes.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, Joaquin Murrieta remains an often ignored cousin, a West Coast Chicano whose insistence on singing in Spanish prompts the mainstream Anglophone American culture industry to wonder if "Joaquin Murrieta" is even part of the larger family of American folk music in the first place. The Murrieta corrido's unique capacity to speak out against racism of individual Anglos and Anglocentric state policies is inseparable from its unconventional subjectivity. Later in this chapter, when discussing Murrieta's subjectivity in the Ridge's novel, I will invoke Murrieta's connections and contrasts to John Henry in order to clarify my points.

The inclination to become Joaquin is a literary and cultural phenomenon that first takes shape in John Rollin Ridge's 1854 novel and develops via the *corrido* into the rousing rhetoric and absorptive subjectivity of Rodolfo Gonzales's 1967 poem, *I Am Joaquin*. Due largely to the wide influence of Gonzales's landmark poem, the phrase "I am Joaquin" has become a trope of defiance and resistance to expansive American hegemony. Each time John Rollin Ridge writes the phrase, "I am Joaquin!" (always with the exclamation point), in *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, the hero is disguised or undetected in the presence of hostile Anglos. By declaring, "I am Joaquin," Ridge's protagonist emerges from the anonymous masses and assumes a defiant position in relation to his surroundings. Ridge deliberately suggests that Joaquin could remain undetected indefinitely if not for these verbal acts of self-identification. Ridge's novel implies that potentially anyone *could be* Joaquin, and that Joaquin could be anywhere. In the corrido, Joaquin lives on precisely because he could be anyone, anywhere. And in Gonzales's poem, all Chicanos are Joaquin.<sup>46</sup> My central inquiry in this chapter is two-fold: Who exactly is Joaquin Murrieta, and how does his unique subjectivity develop from Ridge to Gonzales?

By having the speaker become the hero, the phrase "I am Joaquin!" enacts a scenario similar to the line, "I am Spartacus!" in Stanley Kubrick's 1960 film, *Spartacus*, or the line, "I am Malcolm X!" in Spike Lee's 1992 film, *Malcolm X*. In the case of Kubrick's film, the hero's followers refuse to let him suffer individually. Spartacus's faction stands together in order to protect their leader, even though this action ultimately sentences all of them to death by crucifixion, signifying the inseparable connection between Spartacus as leader of slave revolt and the masses involved in the uprising. In the case of Lee's film, the line is delivered after Malcolm X's death, and a panoply of African-Americans and black Africans speak the line, producing a cascading effect that literalizes the great leader's resonant influence on "his" people. While the act of becoming Murrieta is grammatically similar to these instances of becoming Spartacus or Malcolm X, the contrasts are significant. Murrieta's inherent fictionality distinguishes him in relation to historical figures like Malcolm X. Although Murrieta is believed to have led an uprising against forces of injustice, he was entirely different from Malcolm X in that no verifiable evidence exists proving that Joaquin Murrieta ever existed. The "true" story of Joaquin Murrieta is more akin to the story of Spartacus, an ancient icon of resistance whose identity is both codified and debated by scholars both ancient and contemporary. However, while the Kubrick film is the only

instance wherein characters become Spartacus, becoming Joaquin Murrieta is a traditional trope of recounting Murrieta's story through a living transgenerational folk ballad. Furthermore, to become Joaquin Murrieta is not simply a show of respect or a demonstration of an epic leader's lasting influence; rather, to become Joaquin Murrieta is to call an imaginary character into existence time and time again, most often from the subject-position of the same disenfranchised borderlands Mexican body politic that Murrieta was believed to represent during his "life."

The severed "Head of Joaquin Murrieta" functioned in 1853 as both death warrant and confirmation of death. It was the only physical evidence of itself, the only concrete signifier of the potential existence of Murrieta's physical body. The severed head was a highly visible and iconic image of American dominance in post-Gold Rush California, but the head was never publicly visible while connected to its body, never able to speak for itself. Unlike John Henry, who must have spoken for himself during his lifetime, Joaquin Murrieta only speaks after his alleged death. The phrase "I am Joaquin!" enacts the fundamental paradox of the Murrieta mythos—Murrieta body's has never been seen in public, yet "here" he is, pronouncing his own existence. Because the physical body of Murrieta has always been an *absent body*, the *narrative body* of Murrieta's life is *the only body* of Joaquin Murrieta. This narrative body is what Ridge constructs in 1854, and this is what enables Gonzales to render a collective consciousness in the late-1960s.

In the analysis that follows, I will demonstrate how the absent body of Joaquin Murrieta evolves from a post-mortem historical object into an ahistorical literary persona. Focusing on the Ridge novel and the "Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta" as primary pivot points in the evolution of the Murrieta persona, I will trace the hero's absent body from its historical context in 1853 to its role as a vehicle for an amalgamated counter-cultural consciousness in Gonzales's 1967 poem. In asserting that Ridge constructs Joaquin's motivation for revenge in a manner that invites the corridistas that followed him to become Joaquin, I posit that Ridge played a crucial yet unsung role in the eventual production of Gonzales's Chicano anthem. This connection between Ridge and Gonzales is substantial and significant, and it has been long under-researched by scholars of both Chicano/a and Native American literatures.

Ultimately, in order to understand the nuanced production of Murrieta's narrative body in the Ridge novel and its evolution as a pangenerational symbol of resistance, it is essential to understand the historical context within which the *idea* of Joaquin Murrieta ensnared the public imagination. Because these historical details are pivotal to any contextualized understanding of Murrieta's significance, and because this original context is essential to all of my ensuing arguments regarding particular alterations and manipulations of the Murrieta narrative, I will now describe the social conditions in 1850s California that gave birth to the idea of Joaquin Murrieta and the textual productions which pronounced his identity after his alleged death. While these details will be familiar to scholars who are acutely aware of the early history of California, they may not be entirely familiar to American scholars in general. The nuances of these historical details are essential in understanding both Ridge's novel and Gonzales's poem, as well as every other textual incarnation of Joaquin Murrieta to be discussed in this study. Because a solid understanding of the events,

the political players, and the role of public texts in 1850s California is the foundation of the following 140 pages of this dissertation, it is incumbent upon me to retrace that history.

### **The Work of “Unscrupulous Tricksters”: The “Head of Murrieta” and Joaquin’s Public Identity**

The head of a Mexican identified by the state of California as “Joaquin Murrieta” was chopped off on July 25, 1853. The head belonged to one of four Mexicans who were killed during a gunfight in Arroyo Cantua, a remote location in the western part of Fresno County in central California. The head was pickled in alcohol and toured around the state, touted to be the head of the notorious bandit, “Joaquin.” When the head was introduced to the public in August 1853, it was the first time that the California government had ever identified a singular leader of the Mexican rebellion as someone named “Joaquin Murrieta.” Nonetheless, the “Head of Joaquin Murrieta” was exhibited across the California Gold Country. The head had a traveling companion: the severed hand of Joaquin’s supposedly brutal captain, Three-Fingered Jack. The exhibition of these deeply symbolic severed body parts suggested an end to the lawlessness that characterized the Gold Rush era. The severing of the head symbolized the ascension of law and order through the new vehicle of American state power. It pronounced and confirmed the reality that California was now a society fully dominated by Anglo American social and legal culture. Just as the severed head of Wampanoag leader Metacom (King Philip) was displayed by Plymouth Puritans at the boundary of their town in the late seventeenth century, a symbol of their intractable presence and a warning to those who entertained thoughts of further violent resistance against the Anglophone settler state, the “Head of Murrieta” signified the Pacific coast realization of the American “empire for liberty.”<sup>47</sup> As with Metacom, this gruesome display was meant to quell thoughts of resistance among the recently disenfranchised Mexican population of California.

In theory, the end of the U.S.-Mexican War should have ushered in an era of political inclusion and cultural amalgamation. In reality, after the discovery of gold, which “brought out the worst in American character,” theories of inclusive citizenship were jettisoned for racist exclusion and state-sanctioned violence (Allende, *Daughter* 234). The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the document that officially concluded the war, enabled the United States to annex land stretching from Texas to California. As described by Richard Griswold del Castillo, the treaty gave former Mexican citizens the choice of retaining Mexican citizenship and residing within the newly Americanized space or abandoning their former Mexican citizenship for U.S. citizenship (*Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* 65-66). The options faced by Mexicans after the war were complicated by racism: “Mexico had granted citizenship to ‘civilized’ Indians and the Blacks, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo clearly stated that former Mexican citizens would be given the opportunity to become citizens of the United States” (Griswold del Castillo, *Treaty* 66). The Treaty extended potential citizenship and civic responsibility to “every white, male citizen of Mexico who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States” (qtd. in Vasquez 61). The Treaty, in spite of its racist underpinnings—*Californio* landowners had to endorse “the racist views of their

Anglo colleagues toward Indians and blacks” (Griswold del Castillo, *Treaty* 66)—should have protected the property rights of all Mexicans, especially the *Californio* elite. Clearly it did not. Joaquin’s “life,” then, reflected the entire Mexican population in California, even the wealthy landowners. Joaquin’s beheading reflected the general disenfranchisement and dismembering of the Mexican body politic.

California’s transformation into an Anglo American state was abrupt and violent. Gold was “discovered” at Sutter’s Mill on January 24, 1848, just one week before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed on February 2. California’s transition from Mexican to American state was marked by a mass influx of fortune-seekers from all over the globe. Between 1848 and 1850, the population of California rose from 15,000 to 93,000 (Almaguer 70). The Mexican population quickly shifted from being the majority group in a Northwest Mexican borderlands state to being one of many non-white minority ethnic groups in the new far Western American state. As gold grew less abundant in 1849 and 1850, masses of white miners grew hostile toward Latinos and Asians. This hostility expressed itself through both the brute violence of white settlers and the legalese of Anglo Californian laws. The “Foreign Miner’s Tax Law” of 1850 “set up a tax system expressly designed to make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any but ‘native or natural-born citizens of the United States’ to mine gold” (Jackson xv). Since miners from northern Europe and Australia were not considered foreigners, “foreign” in early California clearly denoted “non-white.” Jesse Alemán claims that the Foreign Miner’s Tax “essentially criminalized the Mexican body politic as a foreign element in California” (85). More to the point, Tomás Almaguer describes it as “a clear example of an attempt at social closure” (70). The irony of the Foreign Miner’s Tax is that the people who perhaps suffered the most from it—Mexican people—considered themselves “natives.” Irony notwithstanding, the taxes had their desired effect. Latin Americans left California en masse, many returning to Chile and Peru.<sup>48</sup> The thousands of Mexican Americans who remained “found themselves displaced persons without understanding quite what had happened to them” (Jackson xvii). Always the suspects, always the pariahs, always threatened by “Judge Lynch,” some Mexicans turned to banditry. As Nadeau writes, “With such provocation, it was little wonder that some Mexicans struck back” (29).

As a consequence of being disenfranchised by the government and violently brutalized by Anglo racists, some Mexicans began to retaliate by attacking Americans, stirring the collective tensions that would create “Joaquin.” Anger over the war still loomed, lingering in the memories and fueling the motives of veterans who remained in California. When Anglo Americans were murdered in the summer and fall of 1851, the killings were all attributed to Mexicans. Rumors circulated in the newspapers and, of course, through word of mouth. Leal writes:

The name Joaquin was first used in the newspapers to refer to Mexican bandits, though without identifying any one of them by a surname, between 1850 and 1851. In 1852 when the newspapers began to publish complaints about the so-called Mexican bandits, they had no concrete information as to who those “bandits” might be, although it was rumored that one was named Joaquin. (Introduction xii)

Joaquin, a common Spanish name, had come to mean “bandit” for many Anglo Californians. Soon all thefts and murders were attributed to this elusive, and perhaps imaginary, figure



named Joaquin. Crimes that occurred hundreds of miles apart at roughly the same time would all be attributed to “Joaquin.” And while many assaults upon Anglo and Chinese Americans did occur, it has never been established that someone named Joaquin Murrieta necessarily committed any of them.

The surname “Murieta” enters the public sphere through an article published in the *Los Angeles Star* on November 27, 1852. This was a foundational moment in the imaginative manifestation of Murrieta’s absent body. After the unsolved murder of American General Joshua Bean in November 1852, a teenage Mexican horse thief named Reyes Feliz was hung in Los Angeles. Feliz was supposedly the brother of Joaquin’s female partner. Though Feliz was not involved in Bean’s murder, it was widely assumed that he shared some of the guilt. Feliz did, however, claim to have “belonged to the company of Joaquin Murieta” (qtd. in Nadeau 25). This newspaper story is the document that “first established Murieta’s public identity” (Thornton 15).<sup>49</sup> Then in January 1853, shortly after “Joaquin Murieta” is reported to be the identity of a leading Mexican bandit, a reign of terror hit Calaveras and Mariposa Counties, leaving several Americans dead at the hands, presumably, of Joaquin. “From that point on,” reports Thornton, “every murder and robbery was attributed to the ubiquitous Joaquin, the newspapers whipping up hysteria by presenting unsubstantiated rumors as fact” (17). There was the slight problem that some articles referred to him as Joaquin Carrillo. Others suggested Joaquin Valenzuela. Others just “Joaquin.” But regardless of his surname, the character’s reputation for daring escapes was already entrenched. The legend of “Joaquin” had been born in the public imagination.

The story of Joaquin’s personal suffering first infiltrates the larger narrative of public experience in California via the San Francisco *Daily Herald* of April 18, 1853. The article, “Latest Account of Joaquin,” written by an anonymous “Monterey correspondent,” reports that the notorious “Joaquin” visited the home of an anonymous American rancher on the “Salinas Plain.” Joaquin, traveling with “two of his band,” knocked on a rancher’s door “one night last week” and “civily [*sic*] asked for some refreshment.” After giving the travelers a warm welcome, and noticing that they are “armed to the teeth,” the rancher asks if the travelers have been in the placers lately, or if they know or have heard anything about the mysterious “Joaquin.”<sup>50</sup> The visitor holds his hand over his heart, and “with grave politeness and penetrating glance,” announces, “Sir, I am that Joaquin.” The article explains:

Without any further ceremony, and perfectly unexcited, the robber went on to relate the reasons of his conduct in his late career—he had been oppressed, robbed and persecuted by the Americans in the placers—had lost \$40,000—been driven from a piece of land which he was working with an American companion—had been insulted and grossly maltreated without justice—had been flogged—and he was determined to be revenged for his wrongs fourfold. (“Latest Account”)

Joaquin apparently came to California in order to get away from “the insecurity and revolutions of Mexico,” only to find it much worse in America with such “lawless neighbors.” Joaquin reports that he was “annoyed, insulted, and injured to such a degree, by my neighbors, that I could not live in peace.” He claims to have been “swindled and robbed” by “the very men for whom I had had the greatest friendship and admiration. I saw them daily commit acts of the most outrageous and lawless injustice, or of cunning and

mean duplicity, hateful to every honorable mind. I then said to myself, I will revenge my wrongs, and take the law in my own hands” (“Latest Account”).

This *Herald* story from April 1853 is the first Anglophone text to suggest the heroism of California’s great public enemy, and its residual traces are clearly evident in Ridge’s novel. The chorus of “injustice” and “lawlessness” that repeats throughout Ridge’s book first takes shape in the *Herald’s* account. Ridge also appropriates the notion of Joaquin’s public flogging, although the *Herald’s* vague description of Joaquin’s beating does not approach the severity described by Ridge. While the anonymity of the *Herald* piece makes its factuality altogether questionable, the writer notes, “Now, if Joaquin’s words are gospel, (which God only knows,) it is foolish to call him ‘a mean, cowardly Mexican;’ he must be a *bravo*, a *valiente*, an *hombre de vicio*” (“Latest Account”). The parenthetical reference to “God only knows” seems to give the nameless reporter much leeway in offering details that may or may not be founded in true experience. Nonetheless, it gave Ridge the “cloth” he would need to fabricate his character’s experiences. Referring to this April 18, 1853 article in the *Daily Herald*, Remi Nadeau writes: “Out of this fragment—for there is no other contemporary record of such injustice upon Joaquin—John Rollin Ridge wove a whole cloth of persecution—lynching Joaquin’s brother for a fancied theft, ravishing his sweetheart before his eyes, and whipping Joaquin within an inch of his life” (30). But before Ridge could weave his tale, Joaquin’s illusory body needed a public symbol (the head) to signify the possibility of its existence.

After the “Salinas Plain” story hit the public, Joaquin mania continued to grow. Joaquin’s public identity surely involved more fabrication than fact, but it was also a fact that corpses were piling up. It was surely difficult for any critical thinker to believe, as the *Los Angeles Star* sarcastically printed, that Joaquin could have been “in four counties and ten townships at the same time” (qtd. in Thornton 18). But the body count was undeniable and probably larger than we know.<sup>51</sup> A group of Mexicans, or better yet several groups of Mexicans, were on killing sprees.<sup>52</sup> As Hubert Howe Bancroft explains, several Americans became followers of Murrieta and participated in the violence:

The number of murders committed by Joaquin and his men during the comparatively brief period in which they were abroad is truly astonishing. They were particularly hard on the Chinamen, literally strewing the highways with their carcasses, like slaughtered pigs, and robbing them at every turn. Several renegade Americans were among the robbers who won the respect of the bandit chief by deeds as bloody and heartless as ever stained the annals of human wrong. (*California Pastoral* 669)

The bandits tallied up “at least 24 and possibly 29 murders” (Nadeau 20). The “good citizens” of Mariposa County, still reeling from “Joaquin’s” killing spree in the winter, wanted his head. Enter Harry Love.

Captain Harry Love, the American who allegedly hunted down Joaquin Murrieta, is an integral part of the legend. He is Joaquin’s antithesis, an agent of American state power and the embodiment of the violent social closure catalyzed by statehood and the Gold Rush. Just as Joaquin’s character changes with the context of each revisitation, so does Captain Love’s. In describing Love, a Mexican War veteran and former Texas Ranger, Ridge mentions Love’s disagreeable characteristics with a measured tone: “[Love’s] own history is one of equal romance with that of Joaquin but marked only with events which redound to

his honor” (*Joaquin* 33-34). Bancroft is less enthusiastic about Love’s character, describing him as “a law-abiding desperado” who “delighted to kill wild men and wild beasts”:

Savages he had butchered until the business afforded him no further pleasure. He thought now he would like to kill Joaquin Murieta. Harry greatly enjoyed slaying human beings, but he did not like so well to be hanged for it; so he asked the legislature at Sacramento if he might go out and kill Joaquin. The lawmakers gave him permission; and, as doughty as Theseus on his first journey to Athens, he set out. (*California Pastoral* 649)

Ridge renders Murrieta and Love as pure foils of each other, two iconic characters whose actions were shaped by their context, describing Love as a “leader ... armed with the authority of the State whose experience was a part of the stormiest histories of frontier settlements ... whose soul was as rugged and severe as the discipline through which it had passed, whose brain was as strong and clear in the midst of dangers as that of the daring robber against whom he was sent” (*Joaquin* 146).

It took the State Legislature four relatively swift months of debate before it chartered the California Rangers under Captain Love to hunt down Joaquin. The idea was first proposed to the lawmakers in January 1853 by Philemon T. Herbert, the Assemblymen from Mariposa County. The only problem, then as it remains today, was the fact that Joaquin may not have existed. And thus, the state would not be able to hunt and kill its boogeyman without some open debate and logical resistance. This resistance found its mouthpiece in Assemblyman Jose M. Covarrubias, the Chairman of the Assembly’s Committee on Military Affairs. Covarrubias, the “scion of an early California family,” was “aware that Americans might easily mistake one Mexican for another” (Nadeau 62). Leal writes:

Covarrubias argued that a price would be put on the head of a person who was presumed to be guilty, without ever presenting the case before a jury; and that rumors and news reports were insufficient evidence of his guilt: Unless Joaquin possessed supernatural powers, it was impossible for him to be in very distant places at the same time. In addition, there were various honorable individuals in California, including descendents of old families, who happened to be named Joaquin, such as Judge Joaquin Carrillo of Sonoma, as well as others no less reputable. (Introduction xxiii)

Unfortunately, as is often the case with colonial occupation, logic lost. Petitions poured in from Calaveras and Mariposa Counties, petitions delivered to the state capital by Harry Love himself, pushing the Legislature to protect “honorable citizens” such as themselves.

On May 17, 1853, the statute organizing the California Rangers was approved by the California legislature. This document is a central player in the Joaquin mythology, for it both reflects the uncertain nature of Love’s manhunt and reifies the notion that “Joaquin” was/is several people rather than just one individual. It reads:

Harry S. Love is hereby authorized and empowered to raise a Company of Mounted Rangers not to exceed twenty men, and muster them into the service of the State for the period of three months, unless sooner disbanded by order of the Governor, for the purpose of capturing the party of gang of robbers commanded by the five Joaquins, whose names are Joaquin Muriati (*sic*), Ocomorenia, Valenzuela, Botellier and Carrillo (*sic*), and their band of associates. (Latta 328; Leal, Introduction xxiii)

Thus was the state government's method for dealing with Joaquin's ambiguous identity. Thus was the charge of employment for Captain Love's group of twenty mounted Rangers who, after a month of unpaid and fruitless searching, happened to come upon a group of Mexican horse thieves at Arroyo Cantua on the morning of July 25, 1853. A gunfight ensued. Several Mexicans were shot. One of them was beheaded, his head preserved in alcohol to survive the journey. The fearful Assemblyman Covarrubias proved to be clairvoyant, as the head was, in all likelihood, not the head that it was claimed to be. Nonetheless, whoever's head it was, it had now become the head of Joaquin Murrieta. As Joseph Henry Jackson puts it, "You do not collect a reward for an unnamed head" (xxiv).

As the severed head began its grotesque tour through California, it took with it the surname "Murrieta." The documents advertising the head were the first documents to associate "Joaquin Murrieta," rather than one of the other Joaquins listed in the Ranger's charter, or simply "Joaquin" without a surname, with the slew of unsolved crimes that still smoldered in the public memory. As Leal writes, "It was in the announcements of the exhibition of the head 'of the well-known robber Joaquin Murrieta' on August 12, 1853 in Stockton, California, that Murrieta was identified for the first time as the leader of a band of outlaws of various robberies and other crimes" (xvi). In sum, a decapitated head was charged with the crimes of several different men. The severed head became evidence of crimes that the deceased was never individually charged with prior to the beheading. In short, the head became the sole evidence of its own advertised identity.

Though the California government presented the severed head as evidence of the death of the leader of the Mexican rebellion, it was difficult for many Californians to accept this propaganda. Just as newspapers had played a pivotal role in developing the enigma that became Joaquin, they now began to question the authenticity of his supposed head. In early August 1853, San Francisco's *Alta California* reported that a group of Mexican "mustang runners," who had been in the north in July 1853 and had just returned to Los Angeles in August, "were attacked by a party of Americans, and that the balance of their party, four in number, had been killed; that Joaquin Valenzuela, one of them, was killed as he was endeavoring to escape, and that his head was cut off by his captors as a trophy." The relationship between Joaquin Murrieta and Joaquin Valenzuela—beyond the fact that both names were among the five Joaquins listed on the Act which authorized the Rangers—has never been established beyond the assertions by pro-Love pundits. San Francisco's *Daily Herald* wryly declared, in an ironic twist on Covarrubias's prediction: "The Joaquin whose head has been taken off is now said to be that of Joaquin Valenzuela; as there are some half dozen Joaquins there is no certainty that we have the right one until the whole gang is captured," implying that everyone named Joaquin be rounded up in the interest of public safety (qtd. in Nadeau 98).

Some newspapers supportive of Governor Bigler tried to assure the public that the "Head of Murrieta" was genuine. The *Stockton Republican*, for example, applauded "the gallant fellows, under Capt. Love, who have relieved society of such a pest" (qtd. in Thornton 23). On the contrary, and far more numerous, were editorials that ridiculed claims of the head's authenticity. For example, San Francisco's *Alta California* "refused even to believe that Murieta had ever existed, calling the 'romantic chieftain' a 'fabulous character' created by legislators and their flunkies in the press in order to justify a pork barrel 'Joaquin

war” (qtd. in Thornton 24). Slightly less inflammatory, the *Stockton Journal* suggested the “reported capture and decapitation of the bandit Joaquin may be a humbug” (Thornton 24). Perhaps most amusingly, on August 19, 1853, *Daily Herald* printed this letter, allegedly signed by Joaquin Carrillo:

Señor Herald Editor:— As my capture, or supposed capture, seems to be the topic of the day, I will, through your kindness, inform your readers of your valuable paper that I still retain my head, although it is proclaimed through the presses of your city that I was recently captured, and became very suddenly decapitated. (qtd. in Latta 643)

The *Alta California* then claimed that the head touring the country was “that of ‘some plebian robber,’ while the real Joaquin ‘is quietly enjoying the fruits of his adventures, at his native home in Mexico” (qtd. in Thornton 25). The *San Francisco Chronicle* suggested that the severed head and its traveling abode of alcohol “could only have been displayed by a couple of unscrupulous tricksters the like of which could only have gotten away with this in California” (qtd. in Thornton 25).

While the journalist literati of the time generally discredited the authenticity of the “Head of Joaquin,” the head nonetheless captivated the imaginations of its audience. While some voices of reason sounded in the newspapers, the legend of Joaquin Murieta nonetheless continued to grow as the severed head traveled the state. Simply put, the public “believed what it wanted to believe” (Jackson xxiv). The legend grew in late 1853 and early 1854, but still it lacked a coherent shape, a unifying narrative to catalogue the life of the enigmatic head. Literally, Joaquin Murrieta lacked a body, and his severed head lacked a biography. He required a narrative body of experience, a life story to suffice in the absence of the physical body of the criminal, a textual body to document his deeds. The head inspired writers to flesh out the reasons why it was severed in the first place. The head was dependent upon then unwritten texts to become both of its own prefabricated public identities: the oppressed hero and the murderous criminal. Those who saw Joaquin as a freedom fighter needed a narrative of his heroism, of the traumatic displacement and abuse that drove him to resist the oppression imposed unilaterally upon all Spanish-speakers in the Gold Rush era. And, more importantly for the young California state government, those who saw Joaquin as a savage terrorist needed a coherent narrative to attach to the head, a narrative that would detail the illustrious, and at times superhuman, criminal history of the man known as Joaquin Murrieta. The oppressed needed a culture hero in the vein of Eric Hobsbawm’s “social bandit,” and the state government needed a narrative to serve as evidence of Joaquin’s criminality.<sup>53</sup> Thus, even if “there wasn’t a Murieta—at any rate not much of a Murieta—it was necessary to invent one” (Jackson 1). The trick of pulling off such a narrative would involve crafting a character that could fit the needs of both audiences: the oppressed and their allies, as well as the arbiters of state power. Just as it fell upon the newspapers to question the head’s legitimacy, it also fell upon a newspaper man to invent the singular Joaquin. Enter John Rollin Ridge.

John Rollin Ridge’s book, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, saw print just over a year after Love’s California Rangers claimed \$6,000 in public reward money (with Love keeping \$5,000 for himself). Ridge asserts without hesitation that the head belonged to the one and only Joaquin Murrieta. Ridge’s assertion is, obviously, problematic. Nonetheless, Ridge’s narrative, “although a fictional account,” was “the standard historical source well

into the twentieth century” (Griswold del Castillo, “Foreword” xii). What we do know for certain is that “Ridge was the first to reconstruct—or invent, according to some critics—the life and adventures of the best-known hero among both Californians and Chicanos” (Leal, “Introduction” xvi). In order to analyze the evolution of Joaquin’s absent body between Ridge’s novel and the Gonzales’s poem, as well as the evolution of Joaquin’s subjectivity in relation to the words that pronounce his existence, I will now analyze Ridge’s construction of the character both as a victim of injustice and as an inherently textual invention.

### **Ridge’s Novel of Murrieta’s “Life”: The Narrative Flesh of an Absent Body**

Joseph Henry Jackson claims that “California might have developed its own folk hero” years before Ridge’s 1854 novel “if gold mining had been a more romantic business” (xix). But unlike the superhuman strength inherent to the characterizations of John Henry and Paul Bunyan, there is “little greatness in subsisting on moldy pork and soggy biscuit in order to get rich. A dyspeptic shaking with ague is not the stuff of which legends are built” (Jackson xx). Jackson contends that Ridge’s novel synthesizes the particular social conditions of the California Gold Rush with “another figure embedded in folk memory,” the “hero who sprang spontaneously to life whenever and wherever some people had much and others had nothing” (xx). Jackson ultimately asserts, “In California, in the [eighteen] fifties, no such hero existed, but that did not matter. Ridge obligingly fashioned one in the image men have always liked for their folk heroes—that of the Romantic Bandit—lent him a name, gave him substance, and fixed forever in print” (xx).

*The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* opens by articulating Ridge’s twin purposes as author: to identify the singular Joaquin and to justify his actions. To do this, Ridge provides a mostly fictional account of Murrieta’s life from childhood to beheading. According to historian Remi Nadeau, Ridge’s book is nonfiction only when it discusses acts of government, articles that were actually published in newspapers, and the official narrative of Captain Love and his California Rangers.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, Ridge insists upon the validity and verifiability of his narrative. In the opening lines, Ridge identifies himself and the act of writing, as well as the extant archives of crime literature: “I sit down to write somewhat concerning the life and character of *Joaquin Murieta*, a man as remarkable in the annals of crime as any of the renowned robbers of the Old or New World, who have preceded him” (*Joaquin Murieta* 7). After placing his “biography” of Murrieta into a global literary context, Ridge then claims that Joaquin’s “character” was “nothing more than a natural production of the social and moral condition of the country in which he lived” (7). Ridge’s emphasis on the cultural context speaks directly to the then-current public memory of the Gold Rush. In his insistence that Joaquin’s actions were not simply influenced by the times but were indeed natural productions of it, Ridge implies that anyone could potentially be victimized by an abusive social environment. Since Joaquin’s “individual history is a part of the most valuable history of the State,” Ridge commits himself to the public good by inscribing “Joaquin” to life (7). The exiled author insists that he will “contribute my mite to those materials out of which the early history of California shall one day be composed” (7).

Ridge consistently suggests that Joaquin's persona is the creation of texts and textual productions. In this context, Ridge's book presents a remarkable reflexivity in regards to its own status as a textual document, one inspired by extant texts and capable of inspiring the production of future texts.<sup>55</sup> Ridge thus locates the book within a continuum of narratives and narrative production, both past and future. A certain metatextuality permeates the book. For example, Ridge directly references the government document that chartered the Rangers under Harry Love:

There were two Joaquins, bearing the various surnames of Murieta, O'Comorenia, Valenzuela, Botellier, and Carillo—so that it was supposed there were no less than five sanguinary devils ranging the country at one and the same time. It is now fully ascertained that there were only two, whose proper names were Joaquin Murieta and Joaquin Valenzuela, the latter being nothing more than a distinguished subordinate to the first, who is the Rinaldo Rinaldini of California. (7)

In this passage, Ridge's implicit reference to the document that sanctioned the hunt for "Joaquin" suggests that "textual production and dissemination threaten [Joaquin's] freedom and life" (Cox 27). However, Ridge subversively strikes a connection between the California government document and the story of Rinaldini, an Italian robber and social bandit. Rinaldini was a widely popular figure, a hero whose highly fictional biography was impressed upon the popular imagination by a book claiming to be a true story.<sup>56</sup> Just as textuality has the power to identify and target individuals as criminals, it also has the power to introduce fictions into the public imagination as factual history. Simply put, texts make Murrieta public.

The book essentially renders Murrieta's absent body as a site upon which the racist "social and moral condition" of the violent 1850s is played out. Ridge makes several references to the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848 and its cultural reverberations in the early 1850s. Mark Rifkin claims that Ridge's novel portrays how "the Mexican-American War continues" to be fought "in an ongoing armed struggle" between agents of American state power and Mexican guerillas during the 1850s (28). Ridge also portrays Anglo Californian laws as the state-sanctioned continuation of the war, making multiple references to the laws that reify racist ideologies prevalent before and during the war. In such a context, Anglo Americans desperate for gold come to personify this racism. Ridge writes, "A feeling was prevalent among this class of contempt for any and all Mexicans, whom they looked upon as no better than conquered subjects of the United States, having no rights which could stand before a haughtier and superior race" (9). Ridge makes it clear that the Americans who brutalize Joaquin base their actions upon "the prejudice of color, the antipathy of races, which ... afforded them a convenient excuse for their unmanly cruelty and oppression" (9-10).

Ridge's seminal contribution to the Murrieta archive is his description of bodies in pain, for this pain reverberates throughout the long history of Murrieta narratives. Early in his novel, Ridge catalogues the brutal suffering of the Murrieta family by describing a series of four events. First, Joaquin and his spouse are driven off their mining claim by racist Americans. Second, after moving to a new location, Joaquin's home is invaded once again. This time, Joaquin's spouse is attacked and raped: "they tied him hand and foot and ravished his mistress before his eyes" (10). In Ridge's account, the woman lives, though she is killed

in most future versions of the story. After the rape, Joaquin and his family travel further north. One day, without provocation, Joaquin and his brother are surrounded by “a furious mob” who falsely accuse the brothers of horse theft and quickly inflict the third and fourth indignities upon Joaquin (12). Though Joaquin explains how he got the horse, the mob “listened to no explanation, but bound him to a tree, and publicly disgraced him with the lash. They then proceeded to the house of his half-brother and hung him without judge or jury” (12). These four elements—being kicked off his claim, the rape of his spouse, his public flogging, and the hanging death of his brother—are the catalysts for Joaquin’s transformation. After these events, “the character of Joaquin changed, suddenly and irrevocably... Then it was that he declared to a friend that he would live henceforth for revenge and that his path should be marked with blood” (12-13).

Ridge’s fictional descriptions of the Murrietas’ traumas function as the primary mold from which all future Murrieta narratives would be shaped. Every Murrieta narrative also follows Ridge’s model in that Joaquin’s first killings are not indiscriminate assaults upon Americans. Rather, Joaquin tracks down the men who violated him and his family. However, because of the social conditions of the time, Joaquin has no legal recourse in American California, and the retributory killings of the men who abused him have pushed Joaquin across the line. He is now a criminal in the context of American state power. Joaquin has “committed deeds which made him amenable to the law, and his only safety lay in a persistence in the unlawful course which he had begun” (14). Ridge sums up Joaquin’s experiences during his first year in California:

The year 1850 rolled away, marked with the eventful history of this young man’s wrongs and trials, his bitter revenge on those who had perpetrated the crowning act of his deep injury and disgrace; and, as it closed, it shut him away forever from his peace of mind and purity of heart. He walked forth into the future a dark, determined criminal, and his proud nobility of soul existed only in memory. (14)

Ridge clearly depicts Joaquin as a man broken by other men. A would-be successful immigrant, Joaquin becomes a man undone.<sup>57</sup> Though the book often asserts that “Murrieta in his worst days had yet a remnant of the noble spirit which had been his original nature and to correct those who have said that he was lost to every generous sentiment,” Ridge makes it clear that these are only remnants and not the proper original (65). The broken man, his dream denied, seeking vengeance against his oppressors in the name of love and honor—this is the Joaquin Murrieta that John Rollin Ridge molded for the world. And as Nadeau confirms, this mold was pure fiction: “the first two-thirds [of the novel] is almost pure invention. The lynching of Joaquin’s brother, the rape of Rosita, Joaquin’s vengeful pursuit and murder of those responsible, the bloody antics of Three-fingered Jack—all are the creation of Ridge’s imagination” (119).

In creating this mold, Ridge personifies Joaquin’s experiences as a microcosm of the general experiences of Mexicans in California during the 1850s. Ridge renders Joaquin’s suffering as a metonym for all Mexican suffering. Joaquin embodies the victimization of the entire Mexican-American body politic. His acts of revenge for abuses upon his body, and the bodies of his family, represent the desire for retribution shared by many disenfranchised Mexicans. In other words, Joaquin’s body—the textual illusion of his physical body as here



constructed by Ridge, and the larger “body” of narrative evidence that Ridge’s book is here introducing to the public—has the ability to stand in for all Mexican bodies.

Given the importance of the “head” in the Murrieta story, it is significant that Ridge positions Joaquin’s absent body as the “head” of the disenfranchised Mexican body politic that he represents. Halfway through the novel, Joaquin gathers with a large body of his troops in their secluded stronghold (assumed to be Arroyo Cantua). Here Joaquin delivers a grandiose speech to his followers. He begins his speech by identifying himself: “I am the head of an organization... of two thousand men” (75). Joaquin then articulates the goals of his rebellion:

I intend to kill the Americans ‘wholesale,’ burn their ranchos, and run off their property at one single swoop so rapidly that they will not have time to collect an opposing force before I will have finished the work and found safety in the mountains of Sonora. When I do this, I shall wind up my career. My brothers, we will then be revenged for our wrongs, and some little, too, for the wrongs of our poor bleeding country. We will divide our substance and spend the rest of our days in peace. (75)

Rifkin notes, “Murrieta’s revenge rhetorically is fused with retribution for U.S. ‘wrongs’ against Mexico, the word ‘bleeding’ presenting the war and its aftermath as dismemberment—a continual wounding” (32). If the reverberations of the U.S.-Mexican War empowered Americans to abuse Joaquin in particular and the Mexican community in general, then Joaquin’s ascension to his location as the head of the resistance movement is, as Ridge insists in his first paragraph, merely the “natural production” of this context of continual wounding (Ridge 7). By positioning Joaquin as the head of the rebellion, Ridge’s bodily allusions work double-time: he continues to make his case that this singular Joaquin Murrieta was the same individual whose “head” was then on display in the San Francisco museum. Yet Ridge also implies that the resistance movement, the entire body of rebellious Mexicans, was an inevitable reaction to the methods by which America absorbed California into its broader and supposedly inclusive body politic. Even if the individual Murrieta did not personally commit all of the crimes attributed to him, Ridge nonetheless asserts that Joaquin’s mind conceived and coordinated the various acts of rebellion. Joaquin’s head was the nerve center of the rebellion. Because Ridge’s protagonist orchestrates every action undertaken by the Mexican rebels, he does not need to be physically present in order to be accountable for the actions. Emphasizing the capacity of Joaquin’s mind, Ridge rejects the idea that a singular body is not “responsible” for all the crimes committed by Mexicans across California.

The individual Joaquin may not have been present for a particular crime, but no one is capable of proving his absence either. Ridge engages the popular notion that Joaquin’s extensive capabilities to disguise himself and deceive his onlookers enables him to essentially be *anywhere* at any time. Thus, while emphasizing Joaquin’s singular identity, Ridge mobilizes his narrative around the numerous local legends of Joaquin’s omnipresence. Public hysteria was built upon the fear that *Joaquin could be anyone*; and Ridge’s novel delivers a fiction that satisfies the public’s desire for this fear to be realized. One salient example involves an American named Joe Lake, a “former good friend” of Joaquin. Lake, who was acquainted with Joaquin prior to his suffering and transformation, unexpectedly encounters Joaquin one

evening. Joaquin is of course a wanted man, but Lake promises to say nothing about the bandit's presence in the area (50). Later that night, Lake reneges on his promise to Joaquin and tells "a few Americans quite privately that he had seen the bloody cut-throat Murieta" (51). Yet this "private" conversation is overheard by "a Mexican" who was "standing by, wrapped in his *serape*" (51, Ridge's emphasis). The next night, Joaquin disguises himself "with a profusion of *red hair*" and "very leisurely" approaches his old friend:

"Is your name Lake?" said the red-haired stranger.

"The same," was the reply.

"Well, sir, I am Joaquin! you have *lied* to me." (51)

After proclaiming his identity, Joaquin kills Lake with a bullet to the head and disappears "in an instant" (51).

The "Joe Lake" scene emphasizes Joaquin's capacity to disguise himself, his acts of retributory bravado, and his ability to disappear instantly. More importantly, this scene implies that potentially any Mexican is in league with Murrieta's bandits. It was an anonymous Mexican in a serape who managed to eavesdrop on Lake's "private" conversation with other Americans. This anonymous Mexican could have been Joaquin, or it could have been one of his subordinates. If the anonymous Mexican was not Joaquin himself, then Ridge has endowed him with the ability to function as Joaquin's ears, perpetuating the notion that Joaquin need not be personally physically present in order for someone who comprises his group's body politic to serve as a proxy for Joaquin's presence, thus extending Joaquin's metaphorical "body" to potentially any location in California. Ridge uses the idea of Joaquin's individual body, as well as the collective body of his followers, to flesh out the presence of an enemy that the Americans "could *feel* but not see" in 1853 (Ridge 110).

Joaquin unmask himself and pronounces his existence to Joe Lake with the emblematic line, "I am Joaquin!" Here and throughout the novel, the line reinforces the notion that Joaquin could be anyone, anywhere. Each time Joaquin emerges from the ambiguous masses—often while exclaiming "I am Joaquin!"—he assumes a position of defiance against his Anglo oppressors. Joaquin's escape from these moments of certain death is, of course, impossible. Ridge thus gives his readers a vision of Joaquin that satisfies an escapist need for perceiving the impossible, but he does so within an extant network of fear and paranoia wherein implausible events have already been accepted as truth by the popular imagination. Many Anglo Californians were terrified that "Joaquin" was lurking nearby. Ridge's deployment of the line, "I am Joaquin," bolsters the common fear that Joaquin could be anyone. Ridge's Joaquin is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere; he is everyone and no one.

Ridge's protagonist represents the generative and deceptive power of language when he identifies himself with the expression, "I am Joaquin!" The character signifies his own ability to use language to make himself recognized publicly as Joaquin (or at least to make people think they are seeing the real Joaquin). Joaquin calls himself into the consciousness of unsuspecting Californians through language by articulating his own existence. These linguistic acts of creation and recognition also reflect the capacity of Ridge's book to summon a fictional character into existence for his reading public. Joaquin's ability to generate illusions by manipulating language is crucial to his ability to survive in a hostile

environment. James Cox claims, “textual production and dissemination threaten his freedom and life, but Murieta is also able to use texts to his advantage” (27). Cox emphasizes how the historical narrative of *Joaquin Murieta* is “intended to facilitate [Joaquin’s] death” (29); and by manipulating language to deceive and misdirect his Anglo onlookers and to manifest himself at will, Joaquin uses his bilingual fluency to navigate through and survive a state-sanctioned narrative that supposedly ends in his decapitation.

Like its protagonist, Ridge’s novel works to deceive its immediate audiences through language, arguing for the existence of a body that has always been absent. As if to offer a metatextual commentary on his own goals as a “historian,” Ridge includes several scenes that demonstrate audiences being manipulated by language, printed language in particular. For example, in one such scene, Luis Vulvia, one of Joaquin’s lieutenants, is on trial in a rural courtroom and likely to be sentenced to the gallows. He is clearly in hostile territory, surrounded by an “immense crowd that stood scowling upon him from every side” (94). With impeccable timing, Joaquin appears in the courtroom just before Vulvia is to be interrogated. As usual, Joaquin has disguised himself via clothing, mannerisms, and language. He is “superbly dressed and adorned with a splendid gold chain and watch,” he carries himself with “gentlemanly dignity,” and he “politely addresse[s] the Judge” (94). Joaquin is prepared to provide an extensive alibi for Vulvia, and in offering to testify, he presents the Judge with letters confirming his “identity as Mr. Harrington of San Jose” (95). Joaquin gives the letters to the judge, “who was already favorably impressed” (95). The judge then “show[s] these letters to several of the crowd, whose countenances immediately relaxed toward the prisoner” (95). The trial is concluded quickly, Vulvia is discharged, and after “many apologies [are] made to Mr. H. for detaining his hired man so long, and after many compliments,” Murieta and Vulvia leave town. Vulvia asks how Joaquin was able to do it, and Joaquin replies:

Having most fortunately in my possession a package of letters addressed to Samuel Harrington, San Jose, which I had to good sense, thank God! to preserve at the time I got them into my hands, it immediately flashed on me that in case I found you arrested, I could pass myself off for a respectable merchant and so save your life. It worked to a charm as you see. I make it a practice to preserve documents of this kind, and I find that they come in pretty good play. (96)

This scene demonstrates that spoken language alone is not enough for Joaquin to manipulate a skeptical mass of hostile people. Textual documentation is necessary for the deception to be successful, particularly in a legal context. In a pattern rather similar to the dynamics between Harrington and the Judge, Ridge’s novel would encourage powerful Anglophone to reproduce its narrative as official state history.

Cox asserts that in Ridge’s novel, “Anglos control the process of textual production and dissemination to such an extent that Murieta can resist only for a limited time” (30). With Joaquin’s head on “wanted” signs everywhere, with petitions from Americans in the gold county calling for Joaquin’s head, and with the state-sanctioned Rangers on a mission to bring back Joaquin’s head, the conclusion of Ridge’s romantic “history” was already written. However, as Cox notes, “even in death Murieta and his men evade textuality. Murieta’s head and Three-Fingered Jack’s hand (his head was rendered unrecognizable by a bullet) become

the evidence that the posse was successful: the heads, not a coroner's reports or death certificates, are the documents that announce their deaths" (30).

I would like to further Cox's point about the head-as-document by reasserting my argument concerning Ridge's manifestation of Joaquin through language: that Ridge's text functions as the "documentation" of Joaquin's absent body. In fleshing out Murrieta's body with language, Ridge's text invites future writers and storytellers to follow suit and manifest the absent bandit through the generative power of language. Joaquin could be anywhere, but how would we even know? Ridge writes that Joaquin "had worn different disguises, and was actually disguised the most when he showed his real features. No man who had met him on the highway would be apt to recognize him in the cities. He frequently stood very unconcernedly in a crowd" (30-31). Without language to summon Joaquin into existence, we would never imagine that someone was capable of recognizing him; for without language, the hero-bandit Joaquin Murrieta would never have existed.

It is perfectly ironic that Ridge insists that his readers accept the veracity of his book, a document that purports to catalogue Joaquin's life and adventures, while rendering a protagonist with the capacity to delude and deceive his onlookers and would-be pursuers by manipulating language. Just as the judge has no empirical proof to reject Joaquin's masquerade as Samuel Harrington, critical audiences lack empirical proof to entirely disregard Ridge's narrative. Herein lies the grand paradox of Ridge's novel: even if we doubt the veracity of the book, we lack any documentable evidence to prove it wrong. Indeed, Ridge said so himself when he fired back upon cynical reviewers in a letter to the *Daily Placer Times and Transcripts* from August 21, 1854. To the accusations that his book merely propagated falsehoods, Ridge replied, "Prove it!" (qtd. in Parins 105). And in spite of the healthy skepticism voiced by several journalists in 1854, Ridge's highly fictional tract did ultimately gain popular acceptance as historical fact. Nineteenth-century historians Hubert Howe Bancroft and Theodore Hittel have been frequently chided by modern historians for accepting Ridge's yarn as factual history, but that did not stop Susan Lee Johnson from using the life story of Joaquin and Rosita Murrieta to frame her history of the Gold Rush subaltern, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush*. It certainly seems that Ridge achieved his mission. His Joaquin lives on, everywhere and nowhere; Joaquin continues to be everyone and no one. Ridge's conclusion posits that Joaquin died "leaving his name impressed upon the early history of this State" (158). Indeed, Ridge provides the mold by which future generations would continue to impress the absent body of Joaquin into the public consciousness.

Ridge's implicit question continues to haunt us as well—*would you, could you, become Joaquin?* The dynamics of this question become clearer through my comparison of Joaquin to John Henry. While John Henry's enduring symbol is his hammer, the enduring symbol of Joaquin Murrieta is his severed head. Many revisitations of John Henry's song emphasize the ability of the hammer to strike connections across time and space. As the Pete Seeger version insists in its final verses, "You can hear John Henry's hammer ring." Anyone could potentially pick up a hammer. Anyone could potentially find themselves in conflict with a machine and, like John Henry, insist upon a universally human significance in the process. In comparison, the "Head of Murrieta" also functions as a universal point of recognition, but the individual actions that connect people with the head are less explicit than with the

hammer. Anyone could potentially pick up a hammer; tools are things that all people *use*. In contrast, Joaquin Murrieta is a persona that one *becomes*. The idea of his head continues to suggest that anyone could be abused to such a degree that they violently resist their oppressors to the death: potentially anyone could become Joaquin Murrieta.

If grabbing a hammer can transform a person into an image of John Henry, then suffering intolerable abuses can transform a person into an image of Joaquin Murrieta. Yet it is much easier to pick up a hammer than it is to lead a rebellion, and simply swinging a hammer does not demand that one identify oneself in a way that assumes a criminalized subject-position. In the case of Murrieta, the question of seeing images of oneself in the hero's enduring symbol deals not with technology but with subjectivity. It is a question of *becoming Joaquin*. As Joaquin himself states, "I was once as noble a man as ever breathed, and if I am not so now, it is because men would not allow me to be as I wished" (106). Ridge leaves it for the audience to decide: Would that have happened to me? Would I lose my head if my life was like Joaquin's?

### **"No Soy Americano": The Murrieta Corrido and the Omnipresent Defiant Body**

To the question that Ridge impresses upon the act of telling Murrieta's story—would you become Joaquin?—the corridista replies, definitively, yes. In providing this answer, "El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta" amplifies Ridge's paradoxes concerning the hero's absent presence and potential omnipresence. The paradigmatic 1934 recording of the corrido enacts this very pattern of identifying and becoming Joaquin.<sup>58</sup> Whereas Ridge renders the phrase, "I am Joaquin," from a third-person point of view, the corridista narrates in the first-person, assuming the hero's subjectivity. The corridista metaphorically becomes Joaquin. Over thirty years later, in the late 1960s, Rodolfo Gonzales expands this impulse to embody Joaquin into the narrative subjectivity of an emergent Chicano consciousness.

In order to understand how the corrido serves to connect Ridge's novel to Gonzales's poem, some context is necessary. The term "corrido" comes "from the Spanish verb *correr*, meaning 'to run' or 'to flow,' hence a *corrido* is, in effect, a running account of a particular story, that is a narrative ballad usually colored by the amount of information the *corrido* maker has at hand, his political views, his feelings about circumstances surrounding a given incident, and his emotional attitude" (Sonnichsen 23). Like Ridge's novel, which was heavily influenced by European romance fiction, corridos were also directly influenced by "romances"—in this case, Spanish ballads that were transplanted to Mexico by conquistadors like Cortez. Philip Sonnichsen notes the wide "popularity of the *romances* among the soldiers of the army of Cortez," for these songs "kept alive the spirit of the old country in the hearts of homesick soldiers" (23). Over the generations, corridos evolved into a popular form of Mexican folk narratives, traditionally sung with guitar accompaniment. In *Corridos in Migrant Memory*, Martha I. Chew Sánchez delineates how corridos function as an "archive and outlet of the cultural memory" of the Mexican diaspora, especially along the U.S.-Mexican border (10).

Pioneering corrido scholar Americo Paredes identifies "the corrido century" as the time between 1836 and the late 1930s, with the era of the Mexican Revolution as the apex of

the *corrido* (132). The *corrido* century comes to an end with the advent of the recording and motion picture industries. Chris Strachwitz describes the period between 1928 and 1937 as the “Golden Era of the Recorded Corrido” (8). During this time, several classic corridos were recorded in Los Angeles by Mexican-American musicians. In 1934, the group Los Madrugadores performed the recording of what would become the definitive version of “El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta.” Like the Ridge novel, which was produced at a pivotal historical moment in the mid-nineteenth century, the Los Madrugadores version of the Murrieta corrido was also produced at a pivotal moment. The corrido’s recording was contemporaneous with the end of the “corrido century” and the advent of widely distributable twentieth-century audio productions.

Engaging the Murrieta mythos eighty years after the publication of Ridge’s novel, the musicians who comprised Los Madrugadores approached Murrieta’s story from a notably different angle than Ridge. The group consisted primarily of the brothers Jesus and Victor Sanchez. The Sanchez brothers were low-income workers from Sonora, the Northwest Mexican state where legend claims that Murrieta was born. Born in 1906 and 1907, respectively, the brothers were young teenagers when they migrated to Arizona with their father in 1920. Like Murrieta, their family crossed the border for economic reasons. Unlike Murrieta, who came in search of gold, the Sanchez brothers were *braceros*. They came “to work the fields of the companies that brought them over” (Strachwitz 16). Murrieta was eighteen years old when he migrated to California (according to Ridge and most everyone else since). Although Murrieta was slightly older when he moved north than the young Jesus and Victor, the idea of his experience must have resonated strongly with the Sanchez brothers. As children, the brothers played guitar and sang, and they were exposed to corridos throughout their early lives. Since the Sonoran region is where the corrido developed and flourished in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Murrieta’s identity as a Sonoran enhances the significance of his corrido for borderlands singers and their *frontera* audiences.

The popularization of radio and recording technologies provided Los Madrugadores with access to the public sphere, giving them a means of connection to the larger Mexican-American community, its dreams, and its tribulations. In 1927, when they were roughly twenty years old, the Sanchez brothers left Arizona for California. It was in California where the brothers became “Los Madrugadores.” They were living in Fresno in the late 1920s, precisely the time when Mexican-Americans began to develop and entrench Spanish-language radio in the Los Angeles area. At their inception, these Hispanic radio programs were “heard in the early morning hours because it was cheaper to buy air time and it was the time when farm workers got up to go to work” (Strachwitz 18). The Sanchez brothers had no radio in their home in Fresno, but they were respected musicians throughout their community, and “their friends encouraged them to go to Los Angeles and ‘get on the radio’” (Strachwitz 18). The Sanchez brothers followed this advice and, in 1930, they began their own early morning radio program on KMPC in Los Angeles. Their guitar-vocal duets became widely popular among the Hispanophone community. A third musician, Fernando Linares, a man with a sweet, high voice, began to accompany the Sanchez brothers’ performances on the air. The musicians initially performed under the moniker “Los Hermanos Sanchez y Linares.” In 1931, their show moved to KELW in Burbank, where the

rent was lower and the airtime longer. It was here that they began to play under the name, “Los Madrugadores,” meaning “the early risers.” They recorded the Murrieta corrido on September 11, 1934.

The context of the 1934 recording reflects the virulent and violent Anglocentric nativism of the 1850s. Shelley Streeby notes, “after the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression, Mexican workers became convenient scapegoats for white nativists,” who “insisted that people of Mexican origin were fundamentally alien” (*American Sensations* 277). Just before the Sanchez brothers recorded the Murrieta corrido in 1934, their producer, Pedro Gonzales, was arrested and convicted on “trumped up charges of rape instigated by people who wanted him out of the way” (Strachwitz 18). Perhaps due to the oppressive times, as well as Murrieta’s capacity to signify Mexican solidarity and resistance against Anglo oppression in California, the Sanchez brothers received several requests from listeners who wanted to hear the Murrieta corrido on the radio. In an interview, Victor Sanchez describes the history of and the public demand for the Murrieta corrido:

The corrido was written before I was born; it is from the last century. I heard it as a child in Mexico, sung during the time of the Revolution, and later in Arizona.

We had many requests for this corrido, at parties, and then after we began to sing it on the radio, people would send us cards to the station and ask that we record it so they could have the disc...

This story was famous because to the people of Sonora, he [Joaquin Murrieta] was like Robin Hood of England. The people of California were more concerned with what happened to him. They killed his brother; they tied up and violated his wife. He was a worker panning gold—he and his brother later becoming a bandit. He robbed to give to the poor and the Indians. The pueblo thought of him as a Robin Hood. (qtd. in Sonnichsen 37)

Victor Sanchez’s reflections here signify both the transgenerational presence of the Ridge narrative—the violence against Joaquin’s spouse and sibling—and the high demand for this song in the hostile anti-Mexican environment of Los Angeles during the Great Depression.

As recorded by Los Madrugadores, the Murrieta corrido “is one continuous first-person boast” (Limón 117).<sup>59</sup> The song begins and ends with a first-person assertion of Murrieta’s existence, emphasizing not only the idea of Murrieta’s presence, but also the notion that the singer must call Murrieta into existence through his own voice. The corrido opens by identifying Murrieta’s national identity and his bilingual fluency:

Yo no soy Americano	I am not American
pero comprendo el inglés	but I understand English
Yo lo aprendí con mi hermano	I learned it with my brother
al derecho y al revés	forwards and backwards.
A cualquier Americano	I make any American <sup>60</sup>
lo hago temblar a mis pies.	tremble at my feet. (1-6) <sup>61</sup>

By quickly jumping from Murrieta’s acknowledgement of his own bilingualism to his ability to terrorize Anglo Americans, the corrido echoes Ridge’s novel in locating Joaquin’s ability to disguise himself in his use of language. Joaquin’s English fluency enables him to *seem* American. The introductory *sestain* thus affirms the power of language—to empower, to

deceive, to lead a revolution. Simply put, Joaquin's generative words enable the corridista to assume his identity.

After the unconventional first-person pronouncement of the singer's performative persona as the hero himself, the song quickly reiterates the conventional aspects of Joaquin's "character." Using Ridge's narrative as the basic story, the corrido describes Murrieta's suffering and asserts that his acts of violence are justified. His brother is killed, and his spouse is both raped and killed<sup>62</sup>:

a mi hermano lo mataron,	They killed my brother,
Y a mi esposa Carmelita,	and some cowards
cobardes la asesinaron.	killed my wife Carmelita. (10-12)

The suffering spouse being so critical to Joaquin's pathos, the corrido makes a point to mention it twice:

Vengo a vengar a mi esposa,	I come to avenge my wife,
yo lo vuelvo a repetir,	and I say again,
Carmelita tan hermosa,	how they made my lovely Carmelita
cómo la hicieron sufrir.	suffer so much. (27-30)

Though these basic details of the narrative ultimately come from Ridge, the corrido manifests Joaquin more directly in the line of Robin Hood than does Ridge<sup>63</sup>:

A los ricos avarientos,	From the greedy rich,
yo les quité su dinero.	I took away their money.
Con los humildes y pobres	With the humble and the poor,
yo me quité mi sombrero.	I took off my hat.
Ay, que leyes tan injustas	Oh, what unjust laws
fue llamarme bandolero.	to label me an outlaw. (19-24)

In its representation of Joaquin's victimization and his branding as a criminal, the corrido harnesses the Ridge narrative's inherent thirst for justice and transforms it into a less mediated expression of the disenfranchised population. Irwin suggests that the Joaquin rendered in the corrido is a Joaquin who represents the borderlands subaltern: the "Sonoran farmworkers, Sonorans of little social standing, Sonorans who were likely to emigrate, as Joaquin once did, to the United States" (88). For the primary performers and audiences of the corrido, Joaquin's suffering personifies certain problems of always living in hostile territory. Undocumented farmworkers who emigrate to the U.S. have consistently been faced with, as Ridge puts it, "the prejudice of color, the antipathy of races, which are always stronger and bitterer with the ignorant and unlettered" (*Joaquin* 10). Such prejudice was certainly palpable in 1934 when the Sanchez brothers fixed the corrido on disc.<sup>64</sup>

Like Ridge's novel, the Murrieta corrido provides its audiences with Murrieta's metaphorical narrative body. Yet, the inherent orality of the corrido produces a different relationship between Murrieta's narrative body and printed text. This difference no doubt reflects the economic fault lines that often mark the rifts between literacy and orality: "unlike novels... corridos are likely to be the expression of poor, often illiterate musicians" (Irwin 85). As such, the corrido transforms Ridge's narrative in a way not achieved by any other manifestation of Joaquin Murrieta between Ridge's novel and the 1930s: it effectively *liberates itself from the emphasis on documentation* prevalent throughout the rest of the Murrieta archive post-Ridge. The corrido, despite its emphasis on bilingual literacy, locates the generative



power of language in the voice alone, rather than in the interplay between voice and text. By transforming the voice of the corridista into the “voice of Murrieta” himself, the corrido metaphorically transforms the singer’s head into Murrieta’s head. Unlike the dubious head in a jar, this head is re-membered. The head presents itself as attached to the body of the corridista, speaking to its audiences in real time. The corrido further facilitates and expands the notion that anyone could potentially become Murrieta. Whereas the cultural atmosphere of California in 1853 made it readily possible for anyone to blame any crime on “Joaquin,” the act of singing the corrido makes it readily possible for anyone to identify with and, through the act of singing, momentarily and metaphorically become Joaquin.

The final stanza is particularly important because it is the only time that the singer identifies himself specifically as Joaquin Murrieta. Prior to the final stanza, however, Joaquin’s identity is presumed, implied through the familiarity of the story, but never explicitly claimed. For example, Joaquin will identify himself with active first-person statements that reference the legend as crafted by Ridge:

Por cantinas me metí, castigando americanos. “Tú serás el capitán que mataste a mi hermano. Lo agarraste indefenso, orgullosa americano.”	I entered many a saloon, punishing Anglos. “You must be the captain who killed my brother. You found him unarmed, proud Anglo.” (31-36)
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The corridista also makes a third-person reference to Murrieta, implying that he is wearing the mask of Murrieta without explicitly claiming the hero’s subjectivity:

A Murrieta no le gusta lo que hace no es desmentir.	Murrieta doesn't like to be falsely accused. (25-26)
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The direct statement, “I am . . . Joaquin Murrieta,” is not made until the very final lines of the corrido (my emphasis on the last two lines):

Me he paseado en California por el año de cincuenta, con mi montura plateada, y mi pistola repleta, <i>Yo soy ese mexicano de nombre Joaquín Murrieta.</i>	I have traveled in California around the year '50 [1850] with my silver-plated saddle and my pistol loaded. <i>I am that Mexican known as Joaquín Murrieta.</i> (67-72)
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As Irwin notes, the corrido avoids any reference to Joaquin’s “death and decapitation” (90). Irwin interprets the final stanza as an affirmation of Murrieta’s continued vitality, metaphorically and literally. In particular, he reads it as an expression of Sonoran “desire to see Joaquin escape the California Rangers, or even return safely to Mexico, making his revenge even sweeter” (89). Irwin claims that the corrido renders “a living Joaquin” and “allows Joaquin to tell his own story”: “The oral traditions of Sonora . . . more than any other lore, insist upon his survival” (89; 90).

I would like to extend Irwin’s argument by asserting that the “survival” of Murrieta revolves around the potential for someone, indeed for anyone who can sing, to become Joaquin Murrieta. In order for Murrieta to live on as a legendary freedom fighter for the dispossessed, an individual singer—especially someone from the population dispossessed—must become Joaquin. Each time the song is sung, it perpetuates and regenerates Murrieta’s

enduring relevance. Simply put, someone must wear the mask in order for the heroic character to endure.

Although anyone willing to sing the verses can potentially become Murrieta, assuming Murrieta's identity causes the singer to occupy a position that vehemently rejects U.S. expansionism. This position has always been fraught with dangers. When the corridista explains that "California belongs to Mexico / because God wished it so" (57-58), or when he boasts, "That's why I set out / to kill Americans / My destiny is no other (45-47), he clearly puts himself in a precarious position with American audiences. Jim Griffith notes that the Murrieta corrido "seems to have been regarded as highly inflammatory by some members of the Anglo establishment," and he provides several examples of the corrido's censure on the airwaves and in public performance (20). Indeed, Alberto Figueroa, a leader of the International Association of Descendants of Joaquin Murrieta, reports that "his great-grandfather had been thrown in jail in several Arizona mining camps for singing this song in public" (Griffith 20) and that his "uncles had warned [him] not to sing this *corrido* in public because it was against the law to sing it in the United States" (qtd. in Irwin 84).

To choose to sing the song, to choose to become Joaquin in public, is to assume a defiant position. The dangers of such defiance are amplified within the boundaries of the U.S., where the corridista may be surrounded by unfriendly listeners. Such a position is reminiscent of Ridge's Joaquin, defying death at will: "I am Joaquin. Kill me if you can!" (Ridge, *Joaquin* 87). Yet, in the tradition of Ridge's paradoxes, to identify as Joaquin is a process of both masking and unmasking. The individual is unmasked now that he has emerged from the ambiguous masses, from the mask of his "real features," to be seen as *the* Joaquin (Ridge, *Joaquin* 31). Yet this unmasking is also a process of claiming and wearing the mask, for to claim Murrieta's subjectivity is to assume the polemical weight and defiant trajectory of the entire Murrieta archive. "El Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta," from its hybrid origins in the late nineteenth century to its fixing as a recorded document in 1934, liberates Ridge's persona from its dependency on the printed text. The absent body of Murrieta now needed only a human voice (and a guitar) willing and able to summon its presence.

### **"I Refuse to Be Absorbed":**

#### **Rehistoricizing the Hybrid Consciousness of Rodolfo Gonzales's *I Am Joaquin***

Just as American folk music influenced the general 1960s counterculture in the United States at large, Mexican folk music had a direct influence on the Mexican-American elements of that counterculture. This influence is especially notable in the dynamics between the Murrieta corrido and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales's "epic" poem, *I Am Joaquin*. Gonzales, a professional boxer turned Chicano activist, founded the Crusade for Justice in Denver in 1968 to support the impoverished Chicano community and advocate for Chicano rights. *I Am Joaquin*, Gonzales's first and most influential literary work, was distributed throughout urban Mexican-American communities across the Southwestern U.S. First published in 1967, and performed as a musical film by Luis Valdez's Teatro Campesino in 1969, *I Am Joaquin* is a foundational text of Chicano literature. Juan Bruce-Novoa identifies the poem as "the first major literary work of the Chicano Movement," noting that "for many

it still expresses best what the Movement entails” (48). Poet Bernice Zamora claims that *I Am Joaquin* “was the first important milestone in Chicano literature because it gave to Chicanos a significant place in the world, politically, sociologically, historically, and literarily. It united us as a people unlike any other piece of Chicano literature before or since its appearance” (qtd. in Candelaria 50).

Bruce-Novoa describes Gonzales’s “Joaquin” as the “Chicano Everyman” (49). This characterization reflects the evolution of Murrieta’s literary persona and fabricated body—Ridge casts Joaquin as an exceptional individual who could potentially be anyone; the corrido casts Joaquin as anyone willing to intonate his song; and Gonzales casts Joaquin as *everyone*. Or rather, Gonzales casts Joaquin as everyone who is Chicano. Indeed, in the introduction to the 1972 republication of *I Am Joaquin*, Gonzales claims to have written the poem “for myself, and for all Chicanos who are Joaquin” (1). If the corrido enables anyone to potentially become Joaquin, then Gonzales’s poem takes it a step further and *does it for you*: if you are Chicano, Gonzales has made you Joaquin through the amalgamated subjectivity of his poem’s collective “I.”<sup>65</sup> If Ridge’s novel fleshes out Joaquin’s absent body with text, and if the corrido enables that body to move from one person to another by the act of voicing the text, then Gonzales’s poem employs language to pump blood into Joaquin’s dislocated persona. It is, in all seriousness, the *Frankenstein* moment in the Murrieta archive where the heroic individual everyman, as a microcosm of the larger community, comes alive and begins “to MOVE” (Gonzales, *Message to Aztlán* 29).

*I Am Joaquin* reveals the complex dynamics involved in the articulation of a collective subjectivity and its mobilization by an individualized persona. When generating a linguistic catalogue of imagery and historical references upon which to construct a Chicano consciousness, *I Am Joaquin* renders an absorptive and amalgamated subjectivity. It is a decidedly working-class mestizaje subjectivity, and it reflects the Chicano Movement’s valuation of the borderlands Mexican “peasant” class (Irwin 80). To conclude this chapter, I will explore how this mestizaje consciousness relates to the absent body of Joaquin. More specifically, I analyze how the Gonzales poem builds upon both the Ridge narrative and the Murrieta corrido in order to produce a text that attempts to pump new blood into the old and ever-elusive physical body of Joaquin.<sup>66</sup>

Gonzales opens with the infamous line, “I am Joaquin” (*Message* 16). Although this statement does not directly reference Ridge, in particular, or the archive, in general, it is clearly derivative of the Murrieta narratives in existence since 1854. As I have previously demonstrated, the statement immediately assumes a defiant position, particularly for audiences within the United States, Chicano or otherwise. This inheritance of a defiant subject-position is useful given the poem’s “Manichean simplification of the world” wherein Chicano cultural survival is good and economic success within the American melting pot is evil (Bruce-Novoa 68). After the poem’s speaker identifies himself as Joaquin, Gonzales locates him as “lost in a world of confusion” and “caught up in the whirl of a gringo society” (*Message* 16). This image of being lost within a whirling gringo society resonates with the “melting pot” mythos of American culture. Further into the poem, Gonzales directly addresses the concept of the melting pot:

I look at myself  
And see part of me

Who rejects my father and mother  
 And dissolves into the melting pot  
 To disappear in shame. (*Message 23*)

Gonzales's poetic persona rejects the idea of serving as an ingredient within the stew of this hybridized society. To be absorbed by the Anglocentric American culture is to lose self and "dissolve," to disappear anonymously into the chaos of a mongrelized American public.

In articulating a Chicano consciousness, Gonzales attempts to wrest this consciousness free from American absorption. He espouses an ethnic separatism and resistance to diffusive whirl that absorbs distinctive cultures into the mainstream U.S. body politic.<sup>67</sup> Near the end of the poem, Gonzales writes: "I am the masses of my people / and I refuse to be absorbed. / I am Joaquin" (*Message 29*). Because Joaquin is constructed to embody all of "my people" within a first-person subject-position, Gonzales is able to locate "Joaquin" as a singularized and unified ingredient within the American stew, an ingredient that refuses dissolution and incorporation. By historicizing his own identity and his cultural inheritance, Gonzales's Joaquin attempts to rescue himself and his people from the amnesiac forces of the melting pot, deploying binary oppositions between Mexican culture and gringo society to strike chords of continuance between the entire history of "greater Mexico" and the Chicano condition in the U.S. in the late 1960s.<sup>68</sup> In Gonzales's poem—as it is in Ridge's novel and the "Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta"—the phrase "I am Joaquin" is an explicit assertion of defiance to U.S. expansionism and its attendant digestion of distinct minorities.

Curiously, in order to resist absorption, this Joaquin absorbs as much as possible into his own subjectivity. Gonzales's speaker selectively absorbs items within himself in order to reject being absorbed by something outside himself. The issue then becomes one of identification—who or what is worthy of becoming Joaquin? It is clear that the poetic persona finds strength in numbers. While an individual "Joaquin" cannot resist the U.S., the poem is confident that an absorptive Chicano leviathan can. The notion of Joaquin as "the one" who coordinates "the many" is prevalent in all variations of the Murrieta narrative, implanted into the archive by Ridge's original insistence that Joaquin's mind was the origin point and central conduit of the entire Mexican resistance. In contrast to Ridge, Gonzales's Joaquin resists the U.S. not only by coordinating his followers, but also by absorbing them. These dynamics between absorption and resistance are the crux of the poem. As many scholars have noted, the poem is an exercise in hybridity, a literary performance of mestizaje. This synthetic historical consciousness is continuously rendered throughout the poem. Gonzales's Joaquin was, is, and will always be both sides of his bicultural Spanish and Indian heritage: "I am the sword and flame of Cortes the despot / And I am the eagle and the serpent of the Aztec civilization" (*Message 17*). It calls a resistant mestizo consciousness into existence in the Anglophone world by delineating the "blood" history of Chicanos.

*I Am Joaquin* is rife with imagery of blood and bloodshed, as is the entire Murrieta archive. However, Gonzales's poem is the first text in the Murrieta archive that explicitly attempts to re-appropriate this blood imagery away from criminalized sensationalism and move toward a self-defined expression of what it means to have Chicano blood. Gonzales locates this meaning in legacies of oppression: "I have been the Bloody Revolution, / The Victor / The Vanquished, / I have killed / and been killed" (*Message 21*). Joaquin's DNA

amalgamates itself through the fallout of deadly violence. Bruce-Novoa links the mixing of Spanish and Indian blood to the revolutionary sacrifice of blood in the name of liberty and equality, identifying the mixture of historically politicized blood as “the dialectical conflict which produces a synthetic *I*” of the poem (52). Gonzales writes: “I am Joaquin, / Who bleeds in many ways”; “I bleed as the vicious gloves of hunger / Cut my face and eyes” (*Message* 24, 25). He claims, “Blood has flowed from me on every battlefield” where American forces have fought, included Normandy, Korea, and Vietnam (*Message* 25). He is the omnipresent Chicano, bleeding endlessly because the United States views him as multiculturalized meat to be consumed by the expansive machine, not to recognize him for who he is or how his cultural history contradicts the ethos of American expansion itself. His wounds gape, and he needs to be patched up.

Joaquin turns inward for recuperation, and, in the process, he convinces himself of the “purity” of his own hybrid mestizo blood. In the poem’s efforts to isolate the presence of Joaquin’s absent-yet-omnipresent body within the consumptive American multiculture, Gonzales paradoxically proclaims Chicano purity. This is evident in the penultimate lines of the poem: “I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ / My blood is pure” (*Message* 29). Cordelia Candelaria notes the poem’s “racial chauvinism when it offers, without explanations, glib statements like ‘I am the mountain Indian / *superior over all*’ and ‘my blood runs *pure*’” (49, Candelaria’s emphasis). Candelaria also critiques the poem’s assertion that Joaquin “defeated” the Moors. Gonzales writes:

Part of the blood that runs deep in me  
could not be vanquished by the Moors.  
I defeated them after five hundred years,  
and I endured. (*Message* 28)

Candelaria contends that “Gonzales apparently does not accept the obvious truth that the *mestizaje* that he acknowledges with pride is by definition *not* ‘pure’ as he asserts” (49). Furthermore, she claims, the poem “futilely rejects the African blood and culture transmitted to Spain during the Moorish takeover between 700 and 1200 A.D., even though after centuries of Moorish occupation, Spain’s people, culture, and language were visibly altered by the intermingling of peoples . . . Some defeat!” (49). Similarly, Bruce-Novoa notes that “the poet’s categorical denunciation of assimilation / miscegenation in the United States raises the question of why it is valid in Mexico and not here” (61). Despite the inherent contradictions of Gonzales’s assertions of purity, these critics may oversimplify the poem’s paradoxical engagements with the very idea of claiming purity. As Alfred Arteaga writes, “By declaring [that the speaker is] ‘whatever I call myself . . .,’ *I am Joaquin* undercuts its own authority” (151). Gonzales is not reflecting critically upon his own contradictions so much as he is “deferring responsibility” to future generations to work through and contextualize these contradictions of a the nascent modern Chicano identity as articulated in the poem (Arteaga 151). Like Ridge’s novel, Gonzales’s poem is much more of an unpolished origin point than a refined endpoint.

Gonzales invokes two things to justify his rejection of “miscegenation” with the Anglo American populace: the Mexican Catholic tradition of recognizing all souls as equal, and the biography of Joaquin Murrieta as molded by Ridge. While Chicano scholars have addressed the racialized notion of Catholic superiority that pervades Gonzales’s poem and

the Chicano Movement in general, they have elided an analysis of how Ridge's narrative enables Joaquin to remember himself within the American masses.<sup>69</sup> When read from an archival perspective, it becomes clear that Ridge's narrative of Murrieta's suffering is what enables Gonzales's culture hero to "find himself" within the amnesiac whirl of the gringo society.

The murder of Murrieta's spouse is, literally, the epicenter of the poem. In an attempt to resist the whirling amnesia of the engulfing gringo society, "Joaquin" remembers who he is by constructing his own subjectivity as a whirlwind of revenge with Ridge's fiction as the eye of the storm. At the poem's midpoint, Gonzales identifies Murrieta specifically:

all men feared the guns of

Joaquin Murrieta.

I killed those men who dared

to steal my mine,

who raped and Killed

my love

my Wife

Then

I killed to stay alive. (*Message 22*)

Ridge's narrative of Murieta constitutes Gonzales's justification for rejecting Anglo blood. Just as his "land is lost / and stolen" and his "culture has been raped" in a general pan-Chicano and ahistorical sense, Gonzales locates the primary historical example of theft and rape in the Murrieta story as fashioned by Ridge (*Message 25-6*). Joaquin's forced removal from his mining claim expands to signify the entire disenfranchisement of all Chicanos in the United States; likewise, Rosita's rape expands to signify the rape of Chicano culture throughout the expansive and absorptive history of America's "empire for liberty." Simply put, Gonzales's Joaquin refuses to mix blood with Americans on the basis of Ridge's metaphors.

In transforming Ridge's Joaquin into the Chicano everyman, Gonzales turns to the corrido tradition and absorbs it as well. The product is a timeless and rejuvenating composite consciousness. Angered at how the Americans have "frowned upon our way of life" and stolen "what they could use," Gonzales's speaker revels in how the Americans have "left the real things of value": "Our art, our literature, our music" (*Message 26*). He claims, "They overlooked that cleansing fountain of / Nature and brotherhood / Which is Joaquin" (*Message 26*). Gonzales's Joaquin becomes the entirety of the creative forces and expressive traditions of greater Mexico. In making this move, Gonzales completely dehistoricizes the idea of a singular Joaquin. While the lines concerning the "Guns of Joaquin Murrieta" speak to the individual Murrieta as molded by Ridge and channeled through the corrido, Gonzales's persona is more than merely one man, or one corrido. Rather, he is *all* corridos:

The corridos tell the tales

Of life and death,

Of tradition,

Legends old and new, of joy

Of passion and sorrow

Of the people—who I am. (*Message 27*)

With this present-tense assertion of his presence, and his omnipresence, the poetic persona of Joaquin seeks to liberate himself from history. He seems to want to absorb *all* Chicano history and creative expression in order to manifest a unified front.

Gonzales glazes Joaquin with a sheen of timelessness, absorbing his creative and cultural progenitors into a persona that is simultaneously new and thousands of years old. In asserting his own eternity, Gonzales's Joaquin actually reveals the adolescence of his paradigm. Jose Limón's fascinating analysis of *I Am Joaquin* as a "movement poem" in the 1992 monograph, *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems*, contends that Gonzales's speaker is simply a rebellious son. Limón reads "history" as the father, and he locates a paternalistic and historical "master poem" in the Murrieta corrido. For Limón, Gonzales's persona is attempting to revolt against the father, to liberate himself from the yolk of all history in order to create something entirely new. The poem presumes to narrate "the *whole* of Mexican history," but "at a deeper level the poet is claiming a total break with and negation of the precursory tradition" (Limón 119, 128). Limón is critical yet sympathetic to Gonzales. Limón is reminded of his youth in the lines, "And now the trumpet sounds, / The music of the people stirs the / Revolution" (*Message* 28). For Limón, this is the moment when "Joaquin" is not a traditional song awaiting incantation, but rather an adolescent attempting to write his own, new song. Limón recalls, "Finally we were writing our own corridos, and Gonzales and the Chicano youth community were both heroes and corridistas. But history and the dialogue with tradition and the poem end here" (123).<sup>70</sup> While the young and assertive "Joaquin" believes that he "and his compatriots ... have forged a new movement that will endure, a movement indebted to history on the surface and in the depths of the unconscious," it is ultimately an unsustainable perspective because it "chooses to break with the past" (123).

In sum, Gonzales has pushed the liberation of the narrative body of Joaquin Murrieta exponentially further than the corrido, absorbing the historicized narrative of Murrieta's absent body and his ethos of resistance in an effort to liberate the idea of "Joaquin" entirely from the process of historicity. *I Am Joaquin* renders the heroic character as an ahistorical absorptive leviathan of resistance. Yet the central characteristics of Murrieta's suffering, as first detailed by Ridge, remain literally central to Gonzales's attempts to reformulate the heroic persona. Gonzales's speaker may claim to have liberated himself from the yolk of history, but he is ironically tethered to his own historicity and therefore undermines his own claims to total liberation. When one considers how the revenge fantasies of young John Rollin Ridge helped to mold the Murrieta persona, and when one considers the time-tested literary tropes that Ridge employed in the molding of Murrieta's absent body, one develops a less enthusiastic vision of this epic Chicano hero. Joaquin seems less like Ridge's gorgeous man of shadows and more like an ahistorical cliché, eternally obsessed with the notion of avenging the murder of his spouse.

While Limón criticizes the poem's juvenile stylings and somewhat shallow declarations of adolescent autonomy, he, like the majority of Chicano critics, ultimately finds comfort in the poem, its juvenilia notwithstanding. *I Am Joaquin* concludes with capitalized exclamations of first-person, present-tense continuity:

I SHALL ENDURE!

I WILL ENDURE!<sup>71</sup> (*Message* 29)

Limón writes, “As it comes to a close, this poem is too anxious to be its own master, too eager to articulate its own presumed autonomy” (128). Gonzales’s poetic rebellion “is less a critique of established Anglo society than it is a protest against tradition of any kind. In these terms, indeed, *I Am Joaquin* is the most ‘Anglo’ of poems, not in the sense of exemplifying the spirit of Anglo-American critical modernism, but in partaking of the Anglo youth culture of the sixties” (Limón 129). Nonetheless, the poem strikes a chord of nostalgia for Limón: “Adolescent in its rebellious attitude toward the father, ‘I Am Joaquin’ remains a primer for poetic and political adolescents, which we all were in 1969” (129).

Ultimately, Gonzales gives us a fiery paradox, fierce with counter-hegemonic conviction and the apparently unwavering refusal to be incorporated within the American melting pot. It is surely a persona that seeks to lead a liberation movement, but without the broader and more mature perspective articulated by Limón, the poem’s methods of resistance may cause the poetic persona to turn from liberator into a kind of oppressor. In attempting to create a unified consciousness, Gonzales creates a behemoth with the potential to trample itself while searching for more materials to absorb. Ironically, this absorption is a mirror image of the oppressively consumptive American culture. The poetic persona of *I Am Joaquin* is an absorptive juggernaut, trapped in a permanent state of shortsighted youthful rebellion, searching for an idealized cultural orgasm, one “GOLDEN MOMENT / of / FREEDOM” (*Message* 18) wherein it can become both “the eagle and the serpent / of Aztec civilization” (*Message* 17). Paradoxes notwithstanding, the paradigm fleshed out in Gonzales’s poem has an undeniable appeal, a certain magnetism, and a certain seductiveness. For young Chicanos of the Movement era, the poem purveys the notion that “Joaquin” exists because of “me,” that by activating an ethnic historical consciousness, “I” am creating Joaquin and enabling him to endure. *To believe that one can free oneself is the beginning of empowering the disempowered*, but as Limón and Candelaria demonstrate, it should be seen as the beginning and not necessarily the endpoint.

Despite (and perhaps because) of its paradoxes and problems, *I Am Joaquin* has “endured” as a seminal work of Chicano literature. I emphasize the term “seminal” here because it is surely a male-centric persona that Gonzales constructs. Candelaria expounds:

*Joaquin* presents a male, often chauvinistically macho, view of the Chicano world.

Indeed, out of the poem’s approximately 475 lines, under forty acknowledge the presence of women within the Mexican-American heritage and contemporary experience. Moreover, these lines, unlike the numerous others referring to specific men in history, make, with one exception, only anonymous references to *la mujer*.

The exception is the poet’s allusion to the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Aztec goddess Tonantzin—that is, to mythical as opposed to historical figures of idealized femininity. (43)<sup>72</sup>

The machismo and general sexism of the poem are not only representative of the early Chicano Movement and the 1960s counterculture in general, they are essential traits of the entire Murrieta archive, from Ridge to the present day.<sup>73</sup> While one of the most magnificent aspects of *I Am Joaquin* is its ability to transform the corrido’s performative embodiment of the Murrieta persona into something even more easily portable and reproducible—one doesn’t even need to sing to song, one need only to recognize that one *is* “Joaquin”—its manner of articulating this persona yields a ready-made sexism. Quite simply, this is a



problem, as it has been for generations of Murrieta stories. Gonzales's poem merely makes this problem more evident. As a 1960s countercultural icon and liberation hero, the male-centered consciousness of Gonzales's epic persona helped set the tone for late-twentieth century creative and critical writing about Joaquin Murrieta. *I Am Joaquin* demonstrates precisely the kind of potentially self-destructive Romantic literary persona that the protagonist of Isabel Allende's 1999 novel, *Daughter of Fortune*, must liberate herself from.

### Conclusions: The Liberation Icon Endures

Thanks to Ridge's novel and its clear, albeit indirect, influence upon the subjectivity of the Murrieta corrido and the Gonzales poem, Joaquin Murrieta has become the apocryphal saint of Californian resistance to oppression. But the historical significance of the identity of "Joaquin" is much larger than Ridge, the corrido, and Gonzales. Because of the name of the "San Joaquin Valley," the name "Joaquin" strikes an instant chord with California geography and culture. The name itself has roots in a much older apocryphal saint by the Hebrew name, "Joachim." According to the apocryphal *Gospel of James*, Joachim was Mary's father and Jesus's grandfather.<sup>74</sup> After accreting centuries of significance in the Christian world, the name "Joaquin" was emblazoned upon the cultural geography of Alta California in 1806 when Gabriel Moraga christened the names of the San Joaquin, Sacramento, and Merced Rivers.<sup>75</sup> The name, "San Joaquin River," had "come into general use at the time of the Pacific Railroad Survey" of 1853 (Gudde 287), meaning that the name "Joaquin" had been thoroughly inscribed upon the California landscape by the time that the dubious severed head of "Joaquin Murrieta" was first exhibited to the public in the summer of 1853. Although remembered for different things—Saint Joachim for being Jesus's grandfather and Joaquin Murrieta for seeking revenge upon racist Anglo invaders—these two legendary characters share many basic traits. The body of the "original" Saint Joachim exists only in an apocryphal text and in the popular will to keep the name alive. Likewise, the absent body of California's greatest hero came into existence through fictional biographies, apocryphal histories, and willfully imaginative public cultures.

Unlike Saint Joachim, of whom there was only one, the California public in 1853 was unsure of just how many "Joaquins" were terrorizing the Anglo populace. This uncertainty created a situation wherein potentially anyone could "become Joaquin" through language. Since no one in California had seen Murrieta's face prior to the exhibition of his supposed severed head in August of 1853, there was neither any evidence to support someone's claim to being "Joaquin" nor any evidence to disprove such a claim. To believe that Joaquin Murrieta exists, the general public must put their faith in the possibility his existence *and* individuals must come forward to proclaim their identities as Joaquin. This is the lasting significance of the enigmatic phrase, "I am Joaquin!" These three words—"I am Joaquin"—summon his existence, as well as the connotations of the idea of his existence. The phrase performs its own paradigm by essentially manifesting an individual Murrieta out of nothing. The significance of the legacy of this phrase and its constellation of implications is ultimately dependent upon the living who continue to vocalize it, incarnating Joaquin in the present by

metaphorically becoming the hero himself and performing cultural endurance by continuously making something out of nothing.

## Chapter Three

### “I would much like now to see Three-Fingered Jack”: Sanctioning Racialized Violence in Anglophone Murrieta Narratives

Jack: "Tell me amigo, if you no kill for the gold, why you kill for, eh?"  
Joaquin: "For Justice!" (*The Robin Hood of El Dorado*, 1936)

One of the many curious facts about the legendary Joaquin Murrieta is that no textual record of his life existed prior to the exhibition of his severed head. When the supposed “Head of Joaquin Murrieta” was first displayed in August 1853, it was the first time that the California public was presented with an image of a singular individual named “Joaquin Murrieta.” The iconic “Head” was exhibited next to another dismembered organ from a Mexican “bandit”: the severed hand of the notorious “Three-Fingered Jack.” From August 1853 onward, Murrieta’s public identity has always involved an association with Three-Fingered Jack. Unlike Murrieta, however, the persona of Three-Fingered Jack already existed in the California imagination prior to statehood and the Gold Rush. Jack’s birth name was Manuel Garcia.<sup>76</sup> He fought against corrupt Mexican governors of California prior to 1846. He fought against the U.S. from 1846 onward, first during the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846 and then during the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848 (Nadeau 90). Garcia was believed to have lost the digits on his hand during the war, thus earning his nickname. He was also identified as the Mexican who gruesomely tortured two Americans to death in 1846.<sup>77</sup> After the U.S.-Mexican War ended in 1848, Garcia joined with the notorious bandit leader, Solomon Pico, violently robbing Americans until his arrest in 1849. Though imprisoned in San Francisco in early 1849, Garcia escaped from jail later that same year (Nadeau 90). Curiously, there is no historical record of Three-Fingered Jack between 1849 and 1853, when the severed three-fingered hand was pickled in alcohol and displayed as collateral evidence of Murrieta’s criminality.

The idea of Three-Fingered Jack provided Captain Harry Love’s Rangers with a ready-made and well-recognized narrative “body” upon which to base their claims of capturing the ambiguous leader of the Mexican rebellion. Historian Remi Nadeau argues that both of Love’s pieces of “evidence”—the “Head of Joaquin Murrieta” and the “Hand of Three-Fingered Jack”—were entirely bogus. Nadeau writes, “Why did Harry Love palm off a phony hand? Probably he was trying to strengthen the case for a phony head” (93). Love’s evidence of Joaquin’s identity is given the illusion of legitimacy by merging the idea of Joaquin’s absent body (one that lacked a pre-existing narrative) with the idea of Three-Fingered Jack’s absent body (one that possessed a vivid and recognizable pre-existing narrative). More importantly, since Three-Fingered Jack was already criminalized and recognized as the perpetrator of unjustifiably violent crimes, Love’s association of Jack with Joaquin implies that Joaquin is also the perpetrator of such crimes, thereby vindicating the Rangers’ violent acts of murdering and beheading Murrieta. Thus, the ready-made narrative

body of Three-Fingered Jack provides a state-sanctioned justification for the assassination of Murrieta (or rather, the person identified post-mortem as “Joaquin Murrieta”).

Since their mutual exhibition in August 1853, the head and the hand have been inseparable, and the “essentially depraved and bloodthirsty” Three-Fingered Jack has been subsumed as an integral element of Joaquin Murrieta's fictional biography (Streeby 273). In nearly every version of the Murrieta story, tensions between Joaquin and Jack signify problems of balancing Joaquin's ideologized quest for justice with Jack's inclination toward senseless violence. From John Rollin Ridge onward, writers of the Murrieta narrative have worked to make Murrieta's absent body responsive to, and responsible for, Three-Fingered Jack and the unjustifiable violence that he incarnates. Three-Fingered Jack's character gauges the degree of statism and ethnocentrism evident in different versions of the Murrieta story. While the original Ridge text offers no simple solutions to these problems, the various texts to emerge between Ridge's 1854 novel and Isabel Allende's 1999 novel demonstrate concerted efforts to simplify and flatten Ridge's complexities into the binary logic of racialized violence that Ridge's book works to undermine.

**“Injustice to Individuals”:  
Ridge's Paradox of Collective Mobilization and Individualist Ethics**

One of the most significant moments in Ridge's *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* comes at the midpoint of the novel. Joaquin delivers a rousing speech to a large gathering of his followers in their secluded stronghold, Arroyo Cantua.<sup>78</sup> In this speech, Joaquin promotes the rebellion's violent methods while simultaneously offering a vision of an end to that violence. He provides his audiences—both his fictional audience at Arroyo Cantua and his literary audience reading the book—with an image of the ends that seem to justify the means:

I intend to kill the Americans “wholesale,” burn their ranchos, and run off their property at one single swoop so rapidly that they will not have time to collect an opposing force before I will have finished the work and found safety in the mountains of Sonora. When I do this, I shall wind up my career. My brothers, we will then be revenged for our wrongs, and some little, too, for the wrongs of our poor bleeding country. We will divide our substance and spend the rest of our days in peace. (Ridge 75)

Murrieta's rhetorical shift from the singular “I” to the plural “our” reflects his status as a representative figure. His personal traumas serve as a metonym for the collective traumas experienced by Mexicans and Californios in the early years of American California. The speech rouses his followers, and revelry ensues. Although the masses disperse the following day, the implications of this scene linger throughout the second half of the novel. To what degree could a lasting “peace” actually develop from these methods? To what degree do the “wrongs” suffered collectively by the Mexican body politic, as exemplified by Joaquin's personal suffering, vindicate the “wholesale” killing of Americans as a means to this end? And perhaps most importantly, to what degree do Joaquin's ideological groundings in

“honor” and “justice” problematize the violent methodology that he rhetorically espouses in front of the band?

It is clear that Joaquin’s speech at the stronghold has a powerful effect on the bandit masses. They “soared in loud applause at the magnificent prospect which he presented to them,” moved by “the splendid genius which belonged to their chief” (Ridge 75). The guerrillas are “fired with new energy, and more than ever willing and anxious to obey him at all hazards and under the most disadvantageous circumstances” (Ridge 75). If Murrieta is the metaphorical “head” of the rebellion, then this pivotal speech is the moment when the thought center of the operation signals the branches of the collective “body” and directs them to action. As the organizing “mind,” Joaquin has charged his subordinate limbs with impulses, given them instructions which they cannot refuse. However, in charging his followers to terrorize the Anglo Californian public, Joaquin has encouraged them to enact methods extremely different from his own. This tension between Joaquin’s personal modes of revenge upon Anglos and the collective terrorism that he inspires amongst his followers is an undercurrent of the entire novel.

Only one day after Joaquin’s rousing speech, a group of unsuspecting Americans accidentally wander into Arroyo Cantua, an encounter that prompts Joaquin to jettison his own declared methodology of “kill[ing] the Americans wholesale.” When Joaquin and a large group of his bandits surround the wayward travelers, the Americans believe that they are in “a hopeless struggle for their lives” (Ridge 77). Joaquin tells the Americans, “You have found me here... and I have no guarantee that you will not betray me” (Ridge 77). At this point, a young man from Arkansas comes to the front of the Americans and speaks directly to Joaquin: “I suspect strongly ... that you are Joaquin Murieta. I am also satisfied that you are a brave man, who would not unnecessarily commit murder. You would not wish to take our lives, unless your own safety demanded it. I do not blame you” (Ridge 78). The Arkansan then implores Joaquin to spare their lives, insisting that he will himself “kill the first man who says a word” about Murrieta’s whereabouts (Ridge 78). He states: “I stake my honor, not as an American citizen, but as a man, who is simply bound by justice to himself... that you shall not be betrayed” (Ridge 78). The young man’s rhetoric reflects many of Joaquin’s own beliefs about reciprocal justice and individual respect. It is effective. Joaquin responds, “I will spare you. Your countrymen have injured me, they have made me what I am, but I scorn to take the advantage of so brave a man” (Ridge 79). By having Joaquin allow these Americans to leave Arroyo Cantua unscathed, Ridge’s novel renders a protagonist who will readily jettison his stated commitments to unilateral race-based violence. Although Joaquin seems easily capable of rising above the racialized logic of his own rhetoric, most of his followers are incapable of thinking beyond the constructions of diametrically opposed racial categories that reverberate across California in the wake of the U.S.-Mexican War.

The disconnection between Murrieta and his subordinates is a dynamic most saliently played out in the relationship between Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack. One clear example occurs in a scene just before the speech at Arroyo Cantua. Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack have hired a ferry to shuttle them across a river. Jack, as usual, attempts to rob the ferryman. When the ferryman produces a meager sum, Jack is furious. Convinced that the ferryman is concealing money, Jack fires a warning shot next to the ferryman’s head. Unlike Jack,

however, Joaquin recognizes that the “trembling ferryman” is truly impoverished (Ridge 65). Joaquin exerts his control over Jack, restraining the violence by “very fiercely” telling his lieutenant “to know his place” (Ridge 65). Joaquin refuses to take the ferryman’s money, claiming, “you are a poor man and you never injured me. Put us over the river and I will pay you for your trouble” (Ridge 65). The scene confirms that Joaquin is not an indiscriminate murderer, offering a direct contrast to Three-Fingered Jack. In spite of the racialized rhetoric that Joaquin espouses when addressing the bandit masses, he is careful not to inflict pain upon others who have “never injured” him. Doing so would simply perpetuate the cycles of racist injustice set in motion by the war. The scene makes clear that Three-Fingered Jack does not share his captain’s morals and ideals. As Cheryl Walker notes, “Jack is not motivated by revenge but by sheer psychopathology, an aberration in which Joaquin himself is partly implicated” (130).

Joaquin seeks his revenge within a society divided around lines of group identity. The Murrieta family has been abused by racist Americans: Joaquin was beaten, his spouse was raped, and his brother was hung on false charges. In order to exact retribution upon his abusers, Joaquin kills every American who played a role in the execution of his brother and the rape of his spouse. The Murrietas’ traumas, and the retributory killings that ensued, are the basis of the underlying moral that Ridge offers in the book’s conclusion: “there is nothing so dangerous in its consequences as *injustice to individuals*—whether it arise from prejudice of color or from any other source; that a wrong done to one man is a wrong to society and the world” (Ridge 158). Murrieta’s personal suffering was inflicted by ignorant Americans who did not distinguish between Mexicans. These Americans based their engagement with others solely on national and racial identity rather than any individuating characteristics. Ridge describes Murrieta’s abusers as “lawless and desperate men” motivated by the belief that white Americans are a “superior race” to Mexicans (Ridge 9). Racial prejudice was the framework for their indiscriminate assaults upon the Mexican population: “The prejudice of color, the antipathy of races, which is always stronger and bitterer with the ignorant and unlettered, they could not overcome, or if they could, would not, because it afforded them a convenient excuse for their unmanly cruelty and oppression” (Ridge 9-10). Joaquin’s refusal to kill the ferryman and the Arkansan demonstrates his refusal to succumb to the totalizing racial prejudice that compelled those Americans to initially terrorize the Murrieta family. Essentially, Ridge’s Joaquin is a man who wants to enact the basic moral of the novel, someone who wants to deal “justly” with other individuals.

One of the most tragic elements of Ridge’s narrative is something largely omitted by scholars who focus on the novel’s racial dynamics: Joaquin’s total inability to realize his individualist philosophies of justice within the larger context of coordinating a mass action of the disenfranchised Mexican body politic.<sup>79</sup> As described by Mark Rifkin, the social conditions in Ridge’s novel are a “composite portrait of the effects of imperial dislocation/relocation,” a situation where “the Mexican-American War continues in an ongoing armed struggle” (28-9). Racial hostilities, then, are the context for all individualized actions. Many Anglo Americans view the Mexican population as “no better than conquered subjects,” and the Mexicans hold reciprocal resentment of the Anglos (Ridge 9). Murrieta manipulates post-war Mexican “prejudice against the ‘Yankees’” in order to assemble “a powerful band of his countrymen” to form his resistance army (Ridge 15). The lingering

tensions of the U.S.-Mexican War create a ready-made context for a race-based rebellion. What happens to Joaquin, then, is that he is incapable of applying his personal ideals of justified and targeted retributions to the larger scale of the rebellion as a whole because the context of racialized binary logic is too pervasive. The Mexican/Anglo dichotomy is so encompassing that Joaquin must rely upon it in order to mobilize his followers and coordinate their actions.

As a veteran of the U.S.-Mexican War, and as someone who was maimed in battle with the racialized other, Jack embodies the challenges that Joaquin must face when attempting to enact retributory justice. In contrast to Murrieta, Three-Fingered Jack does not differentiate between potential victims. Jack sees no distinct individuals, only potential targets. Ridge writes, “scarcely a man whom [Jack] ever met, rich or poor, escaped with his life” (Ridge 84). Whereas Joaquin fights for justice, Three-Fingered Jack fights for “the mere gratification of this murderous propensity, and it required all Joaquin’s firmness and determination to hold him in check” (16). Joaquin’s internal discord over the necessity and utility of violence permeates the novel. Ridge makes it clear that Joaquin does not enjoy unnecessary killing. Though he is often forced to kill Americans who betray him, as well as Americans inclined to inform the authorities of his identity or location, Joaquin appears to lament the need for these executions. For example, early in the novel, Joaquin kills an American who was informing other Americans that the bandits were in the area. However, Joaquin’s “conscience smote him” for “the necessity of killing so honest and hardworking a man” (Ridge 33). In contrast to Joaquin, Three-Fingered Jack possesses no such conscience. As in the ferryman scene, Joaquin is often forced to project his own conscience upon Jack.

Although Joaquin constantly works to restrain Jack’s appetite for violence, as leader of the rebellion Joaquin is also acutely aware of the fact that he *needs* Jack to accomplish his larger goals. Jack may be a “hardened, experienced, and detestable monster,” but when it becomes “necessary for the young chief to commit some peculiarly horrible and cold-blooded murder, some deed of hellish ghastliness at which his soul revolted, he deputed this man to do it” (Ridge 16-17). In other words, Joaquin sanctions Jack’s violence in situations where Joaquin would prefer not to commit the acts himself. For example, early in the novel, Joaquin recognizes a grave threat posed to the rebellion by General Bean, an American determined to hunt and eliminate Joaquin’s men. Since General Bean threatens the rebellion and its collective goals, Joaquin concludes that the General “is dangerous” and must be put “out of the way” (Ridge 43). Yet Joaquin is not inclined to perform the murder himself. After convincing himself of the necessity of General Bean’s execution, Joaquin exclaims, “I would like much now to see Three-Fingered Jack” (Ridge 43). Jack kills the General, thereby keeping alive the quest for justice and the vision of ending “our days in peace.” As a means to this end, Joaquin must often contain his own revulsions and embrace Jack’s terrorizing violence. A few pages later, when Jack bludgeons a pair of Chinese miners before Joaquin can restrain him, Ridge writes, “The young chief, who always regretted unnecessary cruelty but knew full well that he could not dispense with so brave a man as Garcia, said nothing to him but only groaned and rode on” (Ridge 47-8).

The problems of Joaquin’s relationship with Three-Fingered Jack crystallize around Jack’s treatment of Chinese people. After one episode where Joaquin successfully restrains Jack from butchering a group of Chinese miners, Jack declares, “Well... I can’t help it; but

somehow or other, I love to smell the blood of a Chinaman. Besides, it's such easy work to kill them. It's a kind of luxury to cut their throats" (Ridge 64). Killing Chinese people is a pleasure sport for Three-Fingered Jack, a detail introduced to the archive by Ridge and perpetuated by nearly every retelling. While it is certain that Ridge's narrative is mostly fictional, and that "the bloody antics of Three-fingered Jack ... are the creation of Ridge's imagination," it is also certain that the novel's racial tension between Mexican and Chinese characters was not imaginary (Nadeau 119).<sup>80</sup> Although Ridge exaggerates the quantity of Mexican-on-Chinese violence, his book reflects the general sentiment in California during the early 1850s that the Chinese population had been "singled out for destruction" (Ridge 139). Jean Pfaelzer confirms the targeted Mexican assaults upon Chinese nationals in her study, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*. Pfaelzer claims that the Chinese community "collected three thousand dollars in gold for Murrieta's capture" (Pfaelzer 46). Bruce Thornton confirms that the Chinese population gathered money to reward Murrieta's capture, although he claims that the figure was only one thousand dollars (Thornton 17). Neither Thornton nor Pfaelzer offer any evidence to support these quantities, and as with everything else in Murrieta studies, it is possible that the story of a "Chinese reward" for Murrieta's capture is more fabrication than reality. Regardless, the actual terror that "Mexican outlaws" inflicted upon the Chinese community is undeniable.

The Chinese victims of Joaquin's men represent an essential paradox of Ridge's narrative, for they become the ironic targets of a violent "nativist" resistance enacted by Mexicans who have themselves been displaced by the Americans. At one point in the novel, Joaquin's men slaughter 150 innocent Chinese workers. Ridge wryly comments:

The Chinamen were mostly the sufferers, and they lay along the highways like so many sheep with their throats cut by the wolves. It was a politic stroke...to kill Chinamen in preference to Americans, for no one cared for so alien a class, and they were left to shift for themselves. (97)

This passage plays upon the construction of "native" and "alien" identity within the highly contested space of post-Gold Rush California, and it demonstrates Mexican actions which parallel the "injustice to individuals" perpetrated by the Americans. Jesse Alemán confirms, "Joaquin's band dispossess Chinese laborers in much the same way Anglo-Americans displace Mexican miners and Mexican American citizens" (Alemán 88). As disenfranchised people, these "California bandits" internalize the actions and attitudes of their oppressors and "begin acting like Anglo-Americans" (Alemán 88). The Mexican rebellion displaces its collective rage about the American invasion and Anglo oppression by enacting violence upon other "foreign" bodies, in this case Chinese bodies that have even less legal recourse than the Mexicans.<sup>81</sup>

Ridge illustrates the paradoxical brutality of the rebellion in a scene toward the end of the book. Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack encounter a large group of Chinese people, and unfortunately for the Chinese, a few members of the group recognize Joaquin. Ridge writes, "Joaquin was disposed to spare them, but, not wishing to leave his portrait impressed upon too many memories which might prove some day quite too tenacious for his good, he concluded to kill as well as rob them" (133). After making this decision, Joaquin sanctions Jack's inclination toward senseless violence:



Three-Fingered Jack, by a nod from Joaquin, stepped up to each one and led him out by his long tail of hair, repeating the ceremony until they all stood in a row before him. He then tied their tails securely together, and drawing his highly-prized home-made knife, commenced, amid the howling and shrieks of the unfortunate Asiatics, splitting their skulls and severing their neck-veins. He was in his element, his eyes blazed, he shouted like a madman and leaped from one to the other, hewing and cutting, as if it afforded him the most exquisite satisfaction to revel in human agony. (133)

This scene marks the first time in Ridge's novel that Joaquin explicitly endorses Jack's desire to slaughter Chinese people. Ridge's harrowing description of Jack "in his element" subtly suggests that Jack's "element" is protected by Joaquin's abstractions about justice and justified revenge. It is significant that Ridge describes this gory scene while the novel approaches its conclusion, creating a narratological situation where Joaquin's own execution and decapitation is directly preceded by his conscious decision to sanction Jack's cruelty. Joaquin's justification for this violence is hypothetical, a drastic inversion of his targeted assassinations of individual Americans at the beginning of the novel. By sanctioning Jack's actions in this scene, Joaquin metaphorically kills himself; at the very least, his "executive decision" concretizes the severance of the source of his ideology (the head) from the blood-filled limbs (the body) that enact the means to achieving such ideologized ends, as if his ends are so ontologically disconnected from his means as to symbolically decapitate the rebellion.

The end of Ridge's novel—Murrieta's beheading and the exhibition of his severed head—was already written. Like the history of the Chinese experience in the early 1850s, Ridge uses the historical fact of the severed "Head of Joaquin Murrieta" as the basis for several fictional and metaphorical strands within his narrative fabric. Ridge employs the decapitation to render an image of a potentially justified revolution that is terminally undermined by its own contradictory methodology, the metaphorical disjunction between unifying ideals and their violent implementations made literal by the "head" disconnected from its "body." Both Walker and Alemán locate the breakdown of Mexican solidarity in Ridge's deployment of the terms "main body" and "separation." Arroyo Cantua, the place where Joaquin proclaims himself "head" of the bandit "organization" (Ridge, *Joaquin* 74), is precisely where Harry Love's Rangers ambush Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack. After being identified by one of the Rangers, Joaquin "called out to his followers to make their escape, every man for himself" (Ridge, *Joaquin* 152). Ridge suggests that Joaquin's "Fate" was "born from his own extreme carelessness in *separating himself from the main body* of his men and in a habitual feeling of too much security at his rendezvous" (153, emphasis added). Cheryl Walker reads this line as the moment when "the unity of the band breaks down," reflecting the novel's "tragic inability to find an experiential model of justice and virtue" (130, 138). Alemán reads this line as a terminally pivotal moment "when Murieta loses his sense for collective rebellion, he loses his head" (91). Joaquin's decapitation metonymically dismembers the unifying ideology from its mobilized body politic. The brains of the operation are separated from the limbs, and the rebellion loses its sheen of justification. In the final analysis, Ridge renders Joaquin's contradictions of ideology and practice to be ultimately unresolvable. The severed head embodies the inability to reconcile these contradictions, and Murrieta's unceremonious decapitation here in Arroyo Cantua reflects

the disconnection between personal and collective ideology, a severance foreshadowed by Joaquin's speech to the masses in this same space.

**“Bad Humor”: The *California Police Gazette*, Statist Violence,  
and the Comic Three-Fingered Jack**

Although Ridge's novel is riddled with fierce contradictions regarding sanctioned violence and justifiable ends, the vast majority of Ridge's descendents in the Murrieta narrative archive do not sustain the intensity of Ridge's contradictions. The most significant appropriation of Ridge's novel comes in 1859, when the *California Police Gazette* publishes the anonymously authored book, *The Life of Joaquin Murrieta, The Brigand Chief of California*. Although it blatantly plagiarizes most of Ridge's original 1854 text, the *Police Gazette* version makes a several substantial changes to the Ridge narrative. Shelley Streeby asserts that the Ridge version probes Joaquin's "interiority" by "giving us more information" about his internal anguish, thus inviting American readers to identify with the hero's suffering in spite of his violent record, while the *Police Gazette* version "focuses on actions and usually refrains from speculating on Murrieta's motives and feelings" (Streeby 263). Streeby claims, "although Ridge implies that the citizens of California need to think about how race prejudice turned Murrieta into a criminal, the *California Police Gazette* makes Murrieta into an example of an innate, alien criminality" (Streeby 266). If Ridge's book is self-reflexively critical of the process by which ethnocentric and nationalized violence (for both English- and Spanish-speakers) receives ideological sanction and community support, then the *California Police Gazette* bypasses such reflexivity in order to provide Anglophone California with a post-beheading rationale for the Rangers' violence against the alleged body of Joaquin Murrieta. In short, the *Police Gazette* attempts to sanction racist American violence against Mexicans, a dynamic that becomes particularly evident upon a focused comparison of *Police Gazette* revisions with the original Ridge text.

By supplanting Joaquin's internal discord over the necessity of violent revenge with an enhanced emphasis on the violence and bloodshed itself, the *Police Gazette's* methods of selective plagiarism reflect its teleology. The *Police Gazette's* primary purpose is to confirm that Joaquin Murrieta was indeed the man whose head was presented to the public by Harry Love in 1853. Ridge claims this same purpose on the very first page of his novel, but Ridge's narrative is also critical of the early state government and of the anti-Latino racism that it engendered. Ridge insists that he has not written his book "for the purpose of ministering to any depraved taste for the dark and horrible in human action, but rather to contribute [his] might to those materials out of which the *early history of California* shall one day be composed" (Ridge 7, emphasis added). In contrast, the *Police Gazette's* anonymous author aims to "contribute to those materials out of which the *criminal history of the State*, shall at some future day be composed" (CPG 1, emphasis added).<sup>82</sup> In its focus upon "criminal history," as opposed to Ridge's more inclusive "early history," the *Police Gazette* version aims to reify the political entity of "the State" and vindicate the state government's endorsement of violence against Mexicans. The *Police Gazette* identifies Murrieta as an irredeemable criminal. It refutes the arguments expressed by many journalists of the 1850s: that the Head

of Murrieta was bogus, and that the California government was unjustified in targeting the ambiguous “Joaquin” for death.<sup>83</sup> The *Police Gazette* was not concerned about the lack of evidence at the time of Murrieta’s alleged execution. Rather, the book became evidence with which the state could retroactively justify the execution.

As it purveys images that support racist American stereotypes of Mexican criminality, the *Police Gazette* revises Three-Fingered Jack’s character in order to revise Joaquin’s relationship to Jack’s violence. The *Police Gazette* plagiarizes all of Ridge’s descriptions of Chinese suffering at the hands of Three-Fingered Jack. However, rather than using these scenes primarily to probe Joaquin’s reluctance to harm innocents, the *Police Gazette* renders Mexican-on-Chinese violence to directly associate Jack’s anti-Chinese sentiments with Joaquin himself. Of particular importance is a scene that comes near the end of the *Police Gazette* narrative, roughly the same location in the book where Ridge injects some reflexive commentary on how “no one cared for so alien a class” as the Chinese miners. The *Police Gazette* supplants Ridge’s subtle association of anti-Chinese racism with “nativist” California racism in general. In its place, the *Police Gazette* renders some dialogue between Jack and Joaquin regarding the need “to hold [Jack] in check” (CPG 82). Jack protests the necessity of such restraint, declaring, “We have enemies who are always trying to capture us... the enemies—these Americanos—it is my duty to kill off whenever we come in contact” (CPG 82). Joaquin replies, “Yes; but how is it with Chinamen? We can apprehend no danger from them, and yet they form the majority of your victims” (CPG 82). Jack claims to “only practice upon them” (CPG 82), to which Joaquin responds:

“Nonsense; you are utterly destitute of one merciful trait of humanity. You delight in murder for its own diabolical sake, and gloat over the agonies of your victims. You would sacrifice policy, the safety and interests of the band for the murderous propensity, and—but no matter; you’re a useful member, Garcia, and I merely talk to you thus, because you too often unnecessarily endanger your own life.” (CPG 82)

At the beginning of his paragraph, Murrieta seems prepared to vindicate the rights of Chinese people or at least reflect on the lack of justice inherent in Mexican targeting of Chinese victims. However, Joaquin’s reprimand of Three-Fingered Jack turns out to have nothing to do with human rights or respect. Rather, Joaquin dismisses such concerns as “no matter,” claiming to take interest “merely” in Jack’s life rather than the lives of anyone outside his community of criminals. Whereas the Ridge novel mobilizes indefinite contradictions, the *Police Gazette*’s revision of the above scene renders tension between Jack and Joaquin in order to resolve that tension, flattening their ideological contrasts into a monolithically “criminal” image of the “Mexican bandit.”

The *Police Gazette* version contains several other notable changes involving Joaquin’s decisions to sanction Three-Fingered Jack’s violence. These scenes all reflect the text’s larger agenda of manipulating the Murrieta narrative to “document” Mexican criminality. For example, unlike the Ridge version, where Joaquin personally kills all of the Anglos who harmed him and his family, the *Police Gazette* revises the story so that Three-Fingered-Jack kills the last living member of the gang that abused the Murrieta family. After recognizing the Anglo, Joaquin fires “three shots in quick succession” and shouts “a long, loud whoop of joyful satisfaction” (CPG 30). Although wounded, the American is still alive. Joaquin not only sanctions Jack’s violence at this point; he orders it: “Now! Jack... *this* time I not only

give you *permission*, but I *command* you, to exercise your natural propensity” (CPG 30). This Joaquin takes pleasure in seeing Jack “in his element,” imbuing Murrieta with a hint of sadism that never appears in Ridge’s novel (Ridge 133).

Another such alteration in the *Police Gazette* version comes during a scene that was never included in the original Ridge version. In this sequence, Joaquin discovers a traitor among the ranks of his followers. He confronts his mutinous follower, and upon realizing that the traitor is a genuine threat to the rebellion, Joaquin is forced to execute him. This encounter naturally puts Joaquin in a “bad humor” (CPG 46). When Joaquin and Jack then encounter a large group of Chinese miners, Joaquin’s “bad humor” causes him to unleash his reins over Three-Fingered Jack, and Jack promptly leaps upon the group of Chinese and butchers them all. The *Police Gazette* lifts a passage directly from Ridge to describe Jack’s brutality—“cutting and slashing as if it gave him the most intense satisfaction to revel in human agony”—but does not follow this description of agony with any of Ridge’s trademark reflexive critique of unjustifiably racist violence (CPG 46). In this *Police Gazette* scene, Joaquin’s executive decision to massacre these Chinese people occurs not because he needs to conceal his identity and location, but rather because he happens to be in a bad mood. He has no higher purpose, no idealized ends to potentially justify these means, and instead he sanctions Jack’s violence on a whim, actions indicative of an irredeemable criminal.

The *Police Gazette*’s most significant revision of the Three-Fingered Jack character comes roughly halfway through the book. As in Ridge’s novel, the midpoint is where Joaquin and his followers converge for a mass gathering in Arroyo Cantua. When altering the original Ridge version, the *Police Gazette* excises Joaquin’s grandiloquent “poor bleeding country” speech, replacing it with a comical episode involving a bear. By removing Joaquin’s speech from this scene at the stronghold, the *Police Gazette* once again eliminates Ridge’s justification for Murrieta’s rebellion. The moral center of the rebellion is thus surgically removed, and nothing emerges in its place to serve as the central, unifying element—nothing, that is, except for a stock scene with cheap humor. Instead of Ridge’s well-organized gathering, the *Police Gazette* renders a rather disorganized and scattered reunion of Joaquin’s followers. Joaquin is clearly frustrated with this lack of a centralizing force, disappointed to find his secluded stronghold as a “deserted rendezvous” that could be conquered “with the utmost ease and convenience” by “a few Yankees” (CPG 60). Apparently, the camp is abandoned because “the men... are hunting grizzlies” (CPG 60). Disturbed by the lack of seriousness among his followers, Joaquin is contemplating how to gather his followers when he hears screaming female voices. Recognizing his mistress’s voice among the chorus, Joaquin rushes toward the screams, arriving “just in time to see his three-fingered comrade plunging a knife into the body of a huge grizzly” (CPG 61). Jack has saved Joaquin’s lover from the bear. Joaquin is now in Jack’s debt, exclaiming: “you have preserved the life of my dear Clarina, and by so doing have made me your debtor forever. Henceforth I am your devoted friend” (CPG 62).

On the surface, the *Police Gazette*’s bear scene appears to echo some foundational dynamics of the Ridge narrative, inscribing chivalry and mutual security as the chords of connection which unite the bandits and funnel them toward a common goal. However, Three-Fingered Jack immediately rejects this notion of a nationalized morality, brushing off his leader’s praise and elevating the importance of his own personal memories over the

collective safety and security. Jack declares, “To kill a bear is nothing; and if I have saved one of my own countrywomen from death, it was because I was thinking at the time of one of her own sex” (CPG 62). Murrieta and his mistress are shocked. They are not taken aback by the selfish motivations for Jack’s seemingly selfless actions. Rather, they are stunned because Jack was thinking of a woman. Three-Fingered Jack continues, “now what would you say if I should tell you that my sudden appearance at the brook was caused by LOVE?” (CPG 62, emphasis in the original). Jack abruptly departs, leaving Joaquin and Clarina to reconsider their long-held assumption that Jack never possessed an interest in romantic love. Joaquin declares, “Garcia in love!... Had he not rendered me this priceless service, I should be tempted to laugh him into ridicule with the whole band” (CPG 62). This description offers a stark contrast to the Ridge novel, as Ridge’s Joaquin never debases his followers (nor his “devoted friends”) by treating them as objects of ridicule.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, when the *Police Gazette’s* Joaquin offers this vision of laughter amongst the bandit masses, his statement reflects the larger role of the bear-hunting scene as a point of comic relief in the *Police Gazette’s* narrative logic. Ultimately, this scene demonstrates not only the *Police Gazette’s* pattern of systemically erasing Ridge’s vindication of the ideological basis for rebellion, but also the beginning of a trend in Murrieta narratives that would not be fully realized until the twentieth century: the transformation of the inherently violent Three-Fingered Jack into a source of comic relief.

Three-Fingered Jack’s reference to a former lover during the *Police Gazette’s* bear scene is the first moment in the Murrieta archive where the brutal and formerly irredeemable character is humanized through the process of reflection and nostalgia. Before he heard the women screaming at the grizzly bear, Jack was lost in reminiscence of a bygone era of his life: “Notwithstanding his ferocious disposition, Garcia still retained in the inmost recesses of his stony heart, a fond, though perhaps faint, remembrance of a bewitching damsel whom he had wooed, but not won, at an early period of his life; and whose frown had made him what he was” (CPG 61). The *Police Gazette* uses the notion of Jack’s youthful unrequited love to make the monstrous character more relatable to a general reading public. In contrast, Ridge often refers to Jack as a “fiend,” a “sanguinary devil,” or a “monster,” but never as a “lover.” Curiously, the *Police Gazette* identifies Jack’s reaction to this rejection as the point of his transformation into his current monstrous shape: “The flush of youth which then overspread his features, had been replaced by a half-sallow, half-bronzed complexion, and the eyes which then sparkled with honest pride and manly spirit, now glared with cruel and bloodthirsty desires. The once smooth cheek and clear, lofty brow, were now scarred and wrinkled, and furrowed with wicked thoughts and bloody deeds” (61). As the only passage in the book to refer to Three-Fingered Jack as “honest,” and as a moment riddled with problematic representations of a “bewitching” young woman, the *Police Gazette’s* bear scene is a salient addition to the almost entirely plagiarized book. It mobilizes troublesome stereotypes to imbue Jack with comic elements; and it begins the post-Ridge tradition of humanizing this particularly anti-human character.

### A Romance for the Depression: Murrieta as Robin Hood and Three-Fingered Jack as Merry Man

Several volumes of Joaquin Murrieta narratives were published in California between the *California Police Gazette* of 1859 and Walter Noble Burns's *The Robin Hood of El Dorado* of 1932. Just like with Ridge's book in 1854, the Burns text was originally sold as a work of "history" in 1932, although today it is almost always described as a novel by literary critics and history scholars. Burns's title alone suggests that the impetus of his novel is to provide a narrative in the vein of Robin Hood for a disenchanted public that was struggling through the Great Depression in the U.S. The hero who steals from the rich and gives to the poor will continue to have a hold on human minds as long as wealth continues to be distributed in such unequal proportions. This kind of hero tends to be revisited and reinvented during times of economic crisis. It comes as no surprise that the Robin Hood character would speak so directly to California readers during the early years of the Great Depression, when millions of families lost their incomes, their savings, and their basic means of subsistence. What is potentially surprising is that Murrieta, a character so thoroughly demonized by the *Police Gazette* of 1859, would transform so drastically in just over seventy years. Yet, this is precisely what happened—"Joaquin the Terrible" had become "California's Robin Hood," a development that was crystallized and reified by the 1936 MGM film "based" on Burns's novel.<sup>85</sup> The film, which took the same title as Burns's book, was directed by William Wellman and starred Warner Baxter, an Anglo actor, as Joaquin Murrieta. Luis Leal posits, "This film helped to establish the mythical figure of Murrieta in the minds of not only U.S. moviegoers but the Mexican people as well" (Introduction lxxvi). The film gave the Murrieta narrative its greatest ever degree of distribution while solidifying "the projection" of Ridge's tragic character "into the epic mold" of a global resistance icon and liberation hero (Nadeau 127). Because of its global significance, I will focus primarily on the film during this section. However, in order to provide a context for the film's romanticized criminalization of Murrieta through his association with Three-Fingered Jack, it is essential to first analyze the interplay of violence and nostalgia in Burns's book.

Given the purposes of this chapter overall, it is neither necessary nor desirable for me to index the various Californian incarnations of Joaquin Murrieta between the *Police Gazette* and the Wellman film. Scholars such as Joseph Henry Jackson, Remi Nadeau, Shelley Streeby, and Luis Leal have detailed the catalogue of changes and constancies exhibited by American versions of the Murrieta narrative between the Civil War and the Great Depression. My purpose here is not to rehash the work they have done in identifying the various dime novels, plays, long poems, and "true stories" about Murrieta to see print during these years. Rather, my purpose here is to perform a close examination of how Three-Fingered Jack's character is treated when Murrieta's character is rendered as the "Robin Hood of El Dorado." Several writers—from historian Hubert H. Bancroft to poet Cincinnatus ("Joaquin") Miller—contributed to the nostalgic forces that enabled Anglo California to accept "the terror of the Stanislaus" as California's Robin Hood. Ultimately, however, it is the Burns novel and the MGM film that bring Joaquin Murrieta to the widest audience. In framing Joaquin as Robin Hood, both Burns and Wellman transform Three-

Fingered Jack into one of Robin Hood's proverbial "Merry Men." Indeed, in his third chapter, titled "Murrieta and his Merry Men," Burns writes:

He is the Robin Hood of El Dorado. The live oaks, digger pines and manzanita thickets of the Sierra foothills are his Sherwood forest; and Three Fingered Jack, Claudio, Gonzales, Valenzuela—as atrocious knaves as ever cut a throat—lack only jerkins of Lincoln green, long bows and cloth-yard arrows to be the Little John, Allan-a-Dale, Will Scarlet and Friar Tuck of his roystering crew. (40)

What are the implications of these allusions, and how do they affect the narrative logic of these Depression-era productions? What residual elements of Ridge's obsessions with justice and the paradoxes of violent revenge remain intact in spite of these changes in characterization? What aspects of the *Police Gazette's* obsession with criminalization and the assertion of Anglo law and order persist in *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*? And how does the *Police Gazette's* initiation of Three-Fingered Jack's transformation into a source of comic relief most fully realize itself in an escapist film for a Depression-era audience?

Whereas the Ridge novel and the *Police Gazette* express a desire to contribute to the historical record—to *make* history—the Burns novel reflects upon processes of historicization and the nostalgia inherent to the construction of a popular hero. Burns writes, "Time as it lengthens weaves strange illusions. A murderer of to-day is a villain who is rushed to the electric chair. A wholesale killer of eighty years ago is a hero of romance" (40). Burns considers how "time has dropped a sentimental veil of poetry about him. Myth and fable have enveloped him with rose and purple of a mountain seen from afar off" (40). Ironically, Burns comments on the process of nostalgic sentimentalization while simultaneously contributing to it. However, in spite of the explicit Robin Hood comparison, Burns is careful not to entirely assert that Joaquin Murrieta's rebellion was as sensible, and as *justified*, as Robin Hood's. Burns is well aware of the fact that seven decades of California Murrieta narratives have shaped the character into a divisive figure with two distinct trajectories: "To Americans, who hated him, Murrieta was only a robber and a murderer. To the Spaniards and Mexicans of California, who admired him, he was a revolutionist and the champion of their race" (42).

Burns does not soften the traditional Murrieta violence or the *Police Gazette's* emphasis on criminality, but he coats these narrative tropes with a glaze of his own brand of nostalgia for a time past. Burns often relies on explicitly mythical imagery in order to portray Murrieta, once describing him as "a centaur, part of his horse," implying that the imagery presented throughout his book is, like a centaur, captivating and suggestive but ultimately unreal, transformed through the transgenerational processes of cultural nostalgia (48). Furthermore, Burns's reflections engage the notion of pre-American California as a site for pastoral narratives. In recalling the life of Murrieta as paradigmatic of the shift from pastoral to modern, Burns produces an escapist narrative that transports its readers away from the 1930s. In his introduction to the 1999 University of New Mexico Press reissue of the Burns novel, Richard Griswold del Castillo claims that the Burns novel set the tone for the 1936 Wellman film, which "allowed the general public to flee for a few hours the drab and depressing realities of industrial America into a distant, imagined past and, simultaneously, to identify with the hero's quest for justice and revenge" (Foreword ix). The film's success revolves around the fact that it enables escape-seeking audiences the chance to *momentarily*

*become Joaquin*—if not to become him personally, then to *become like him* or *like one of his followers*. The audience escapes from the Depression to enter a past world, where they can vicariously resist an American social and economic system which had bottomed out during the 1930s.

Like his descriptions of Murrieta in general, Burns glazes his descriptions of violence with a nostalgic sheen. While Burns makes no excuses for Murrieta's violence, he makes efforts to vindicate the hero's perspective on it: "Murrieta never killed merely for the pleasure of killing and, after he had glutted his vengeance on the men concerned in the outrages at Saw Mill Flat and Murphy's Diggings, his attitude toward murder, it might seem, became, rather aloof and impersonal" (46). Burns frames Joaquin's need to exercise lethal violence with a metaphor of canned goods, utilizing imagery bound to resonate with his readership in the early 1930s: "He kept death in stock the way a merchant keeps canned beans on his shelves for which he may have a call at any minute" (46). In contrast to Joaquin's perspective on murder, of course, Burns describes Three-Fingered Jack as "the most murderous ruffian in his band" (47). Although the book reconfigures Jack to be a "merry man," it does not render him as a wholly comic character. Rather, it makes clear that Jack is "the heavy villain in the Murrieta drama" (54). Yet Burns explicitly balances graphic images of Jack's brutality, such as his own "boastful" description of torturing Cowie and Fletcher in 1846, with references to a childlike and "carefree" personality: "One might have expected such a man, whose lowering ugliness would have insured him a triumph as a villain on any stage, to be a morose, sullen, ill-tempered knave ready to carve up any man who batted an eye at him. But for all his bloodthirsty ferocity, Three Fingered Jack was, as fiends go, about the most rollicking, jovial, carefree fiend that ever lived" (54). In a particularly insightful metaphor, Burns employs the term "merry" to balance the term "diabolical": "He turned murder into a lark and committed the most diabolical crimes as if they were the merriest pranks in the world" (54). Burns insists that if Jack's "heart was black, it was light also":

His atrocities did not affect his good humor. The fortunate man whose throat he failed to cut was likely to find him a charming companion. When the bottle was passing he was the jolliest of comrades; he told stories, cracked jokes, the gusto of genuine enjoyment was in his deep-throated laughter. (54-55)

Burns renders a Three-Fingered Jack who clearly reflects the "monster" and the "devil" carved into the narrative by Ridge and the *Police Gazette*. However, in his efforts to balance these monstrosities with reference to Jack's "jovial" and "rollicking" behavior, Burns smooths the ground for Jack's transformation into a decidedly comic character in the Wellman film.

Burns follows the Ridge model in characterizing Jack's "fiendishness" in relation to the slaughter of Chinese people. Rather than attempt to ameliorate the killings of Chinese, Burns exaggerates the number of killings to a greater extent than most previous Murrieta texts: "It has been estimated that from first to last at least three hundred Chinamen—some estimates run as high as five hundred—died like sheep before wolves in Murrieta's savage campaigns" (59).<sup>86</sup> Burns has Jack declare, "I can hardly keep from killing Chinamen," echoing a line in the Ridge novel that has endured the generations. However, Burns takes it a step further by taking the phrase "born devil," a phrase which is usually applied to Jack by



the narrators of *Murrieta* novels, and having it come directly *from Jack's own mouth*. Burns's Jack declares: "Every time I see [a Chinese person] I have a yen to murder him. I was born a devil. I have had a mania for torturing and killing as long as I can remember. Blood has the same intoxicating effect on me that brandy has on other men" (55). By investing Jack with a certain degree of self-consciousness regarding his own diabolical tendencies, Burns does not lessen the impact of these murders, but he grants his Three-Fingered Jack a greater sense of self-awareness the typical nineteenth-century Jack. This enhanced recognition of his own problems is a quality that enables Jack to laugh at himself throughout Burns novel. Thus, while the slaughter of Chinese people is never presented as something humorous, it is presented in a way that enlarges Jack's capacity to laugh.

Burns invents several scenes wherein Jack's relationship to violence becomes an inherently humorous subject. One such scene involves a woman, ironically named Jesusita, who becomes infatuated with Three-Fingered Jack. However, she has just murdered her former husband, and her inclination toward violence seems to repulse the murderous Three-Fingered Jack, who is ironically afraid of loving "a woman with murder in her heart": "Jesusita, who in the past had found men such easy game that she felt almost ashamed to play at love with one of the simpering fools, was unable to understand how Three Fingered Jack could resist her fascinations" (Burns 77). After Jesusita decides to "unpack her heart to Three Fingers," the "fastidious cut-throat" becomes terrified of her (Burns 77). He "threw up his hands in holy horror," mortified by the notion of taking "to his bosom a woman with murder in her heart" (Burns 77). Burns often reminds his readers that Jack "was a very devil among the girls" (55), something that enhances the humorous irony of Jack's refusal to copulate with Jesusita, whom he perceived as "a vampire, a midnight assassin, a depraved and inhuman wretch" (77). In this horrified rejection of a potential mate whose actions provide a near perfect reflection of his own unjustified violence, Jack's perception of Jesusita enhances Burns's emphasis on Jack's ironic self-consciousness and his capacity to function as a source of comic relief.

Ultimately, Burns's characterization of Three-Fingered Jack reflects the larger nostalgia throughout his book for a time long past. When Harry Love comes upon the bandits at Arroyo Cantua, Burns describes Three-Fingered Jack in relation to "the old, wild days": "Three Fingered Jack, here in his last extremity—the renowned Three Fingered Jack who loved the sight and smell of blood and had slashed the throats of so many helpless Chinamen in the old, wild days—knew that his plight was hopeless" (271). Here, in his final appearance, Jack is rendered as a relic of the Old West, of the retrospective fantasy of pre-American California as both "pastoral" and "wild." While Burns describes Jack's final moments in terms of his monstrosity—"no trace of fear was in the black soul of this strange monster"—he simultaneously continues to emphasize Jack's childlike qualities, portraying him in the end "as merciless as a tiger, but who, throughout a life of blood curdling horrors, had remained as light hearted and carefree as a boy" (271). In this way, Burns's Three-Fingered Jack is analogous to Burns's *Murrieta* in that he embodies something inherently anti-modern, something incapable of being absorbed within the modern industrialized West. This characterization is directly in keeping with Streeby's analysis of the Burns novel as a document wherein "racial injustice is deplored, but it is also relegated to the dead past" (Streeby 277). After Harry Love executes and beheads *Murrieta*, Burns writes, "As the

outlaw died, the sun rose over the distant Sierras, and plains and mountains were bathed in the radiance of the morning. For California, a new era came with the sunrise—an era of law and order” (Burns 275). As such, Burns delivers justification for *both* Murrieta’s retaliation against American violence *and* the statist violence exercised to quell and dismember Murrieta’s rebellion. Streeby contends that the Burns novel “suggests that the ghosts that haunted Murrieta, and the legally unjustified acts of nativist terrorism that provoked him, have been safely quarantined in the past” (Streeby 279).

William Wellman’s 1936 film is influenced by Burns’s nostalgic reconfigurations of Three-Fingered Jack as a comic character, but narratologically the film differs remarkably from Burns’s literary production. As Streeby notes, “Issues of law and racial terror are also significant in the 1936 MGM film *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*, but the movie’s position on these issues was shaped by the requirements of Hollywood’s new Production Code, which was energetically enforced after 1934” (279). The new code was concerned with the possibility that “gangster films and other outlaw stories might make crime seem more attractive during this period of crisis” (Streeby 279). The Production Code “mandated that ‘the presentation must not throw sympathy with the criminal as against the law, nor with the crime as against those who must punish it’” (Streeby 279). MGM’s production received heavy scrutiny from Hollywood censors because of its narrative of criminality and revenge, and also because of the increasing popularity of Hollywood films in Mexico. As a result, the term “greaser” was eliminated from the film’s final cut, and Joaquin’s impetus for striking back at the Americans stemmed from ideals of “justice” rather than simply “revenge” (Streeby 280). This emphasis on justice, of course, has persisted in the Murrieta archive since Ridge. However, under the circumstances of its production in 1936, and in order to appeal to as wide of a North American audience as possible, the film contrasts the teleology of “justice” in Joaquin’s rebellion with the need for the “justice” of “law and order” that drives Burns’s nostalgic formulations in the 1932 novel.

The film imbues Joaquin’s love for his spouse, and the resultant motivation for revenge, with intense pathos, more so than most Anglophone productions. While some earlier versions imagine that Joaquin’s family was wealthy (Ridge claims that Joaquin had a good upbringing and education), the film portrays Joaquin as a common person and positions him in direct conflict with wealthy Californios. The opening scene depicts Joaquin as a “humbler figure who falls in love with the daughter of a rich landowner only to be banished from the region after the U.S. takeover in 1848” (Streeby 280). This daughter is, of course, the woman whose death catapults Joaquin into “justified” banditry. The “poor boy/rich girl” scenario, coupled with Joaquin’s banishment from the community by the moneyed class, is geared to resonate emotionally with Depression-era audiences who are already resentful of the wealthy due to the economic climate.

Following the model of Burns’s novel, the film borrows from both Ridge and the *Police Gazette* to characterize Joaquin’s spouse. She is named “Rosita” (which Burns takes from Ridge), and she is both raped and murdered by a group of Americans (which Burns takes from the *Police Gazette*). Whereas her rape/death scene is given only a sentence or two by Ridge and the *Police Gazette*, Burns devotes a full page. Expanding on Burns’s model, the filmmaker dramatizes Rosita’s final moments in much greater detail than is typical of his predecessors. Additionally, Burns amplifies the pathos of the death scene by giving her

some dialogue, which is also present in the film: “I am cold ... It is growing dark. Put your arms around me, Joaquin” (Burns 17). Joaquin holds her tenderly as she takes her last breath, slowly lifting his head and muttering in a low tone, “I will kill them all.” By expanding Rosita’s death into several minutes of heavy pathos, the film makes it very difficult for the audience to not somehow identify with Joaquin’s desire for justice. Would those in the audience also commit murder to avenge their murdered spouse? The film doesn’t force the audience to take a position; instead, it creates the conditions wherein audience members consider whether or not they would “become Joaquin”—or, at least, “become *like* Joaquin”—if they experienced the same traumas.

The film further aligns the escapist Anglo viewer with Murrieta’s quest for justice through its use of “Bill Miller,” an American character who appears in the Burns novel but is given a much more central role in the film. Miller befriends Joaquin and helps him in his plight against the racist injustice perpetrated by other Americans. The Bill Miller character evolves from a rather minor character in the nineteenth-century Murrieta narratives into a central player in the early twentieth-century American versions of the story. Miller does not appear at all in the Ridge novel, and he is first introduced as a minor character in the *Police Gazette* for the purposes of vindicating general American morality in contrast to a racist minority that victimizes the Murrietas. The Depression-era development of the Bill Miller character reflects the desires of American audiences and storytellers to see an upright, moralistic, and honorable American character aligned with the justified aspects of Joaquin’s rebellion. The Wellman film heavily pronounces this aspect of the Miller character. For example, unlike all previous Anglophone versions of the Murrieta narrative, the film depicts Joaquin first immigrating to the Gold Country with not only his wife and brother, but also with his mother. And after Rosita’s murder, when Joaquin and his brother travel upriver into the high Sierras, it is Bill Miller who looks after Joaquin’s mother and provides for her safety and well-being. The film’s enlargement of the role of the Bill Miller character works to expand Burns’s affirmation of American morality, enabling the viewer to vicariously “become like Joaquin” but ultimately vindicating the ascension of Anglo American law and order at the end of the film.

The film’s narrative structure differs from previous performances of the Murrieta narrative in that it takes the entire first half of the film for Joaquin to team up with Three-Fingered Jack and assume his traditional position at the head of the banditti. In the Ridge and *Police Gazette* versions, Joaquin’s traumas and transformations are described within the first five pages, and the rest of the books are devoted to narrating the “life and adventures” of Joaquin and his band. In these print versions, Joaquin’s association with Three-Fingered Jack occurs without much fanfare and without any narration of how their paths converged. In contrast, the film glosses over the bandits’ various adventures in order to elongate the dramatic arc of Joaquin’s traumas and transformation. The film gives us more time to consider how Joaquin reconciles his quest for justice with his growing reputation in American society as a “criminal.” The film utilizes textuality, “wanted signs” in particular, to narrate Joaquin’s development into a leading criminal in the eyes of Anglo California.<sup>87</sup> This process of documenting Joaquin’s burgeoning criminality enables the film to contrast Joaquin with Three-Fingered Jack while simultaneously placing the two iconic characters in league with each other.

The relationship between Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack is introduced as an inherently textual connection in the Wellman film, reflecting the ultimate textuality of Joaquin's very existence in the popular imagination. Twenty minutes into the film, after Joaquin slowly raises his head from Rosita's corpse and mutters, "I will kill them all," the scene quickly cuts to Joaquin executing one of Rosita's killers in the middle of a town square. The scene then cuts to an image of a "wanted" sign posted to a tree: "Wanted Dead or Alive, Joaquin Murrieta, \$500." Within a minute of his vow for vengeance, Murrieta is branded a criminal. Murrieta's "wanted" sign is tacked onto the tree just above a similar "wanted" sign for Three-Fingered Jack. The price on Jack's head is \$1,000. Although the reward for Joaquin's capture is initially less than Jack's, it is significant that Joaquin's sign is placed higher than Jack's, a positionality that foreshadows Joaquin's inevitable ascendance to the top of the bandits currently under Jack's command. The scene then cuts to a lone Anglo sitting near a fire in the woods. He is one of the men who raped and killed Rosita. Three-Fingered Jack is lurking in some nearby shrubbery, the first glimpse the film gives us of the notorious killer. Jack is preparing to kill the Anglo and take his gold. However, before Jack is able to fire a shot, Joaquin approaches the Anglo on horseback. Joaquin declares, with Baxter's deep and resonant voice, "I have come to return the call that you paid to my little farm, señor." A brief dialogue ensues, offering a hyperbolic contrast between the dignified Murrieta and the drunken, dishonest Anglo. Joaquin shoots him and moves on. After Joaquin leaves, Three-Fingered Jack enters the campsite and takes the Anglo's money. Jack laughs heartily and shouts, "Good job, amigo!" as Murrieta rides away. After this revenge scene, the film cuts to a new wanted sign—the reward for Murrieta's capture has risen to \$1,000. Joaquin is now "equivalent" to Three-Fingered Jack in the eyes of California authorities. Jack's rising respect for Joaquin as a capable killer of Americans is paralleled by Joaquin's rising "value" in the wanted signs.

A few minutes after Three-Fingered Jack's initial appearance in the film, the scene cuts to an image of Joaquin riding alone in the mountains. Three-Fingered Jack and another Mexican bandit approach Joaquin and attempt to rob him, assuming him to be a wayward Anglo. But when Jack recognizes Joaquin, he applauds Joaquin for being the Mexican who easily killed the aforementioned Anglo. It is here that the film gives its audiences their first extended exposure to Three-Fingered Jack's mannerisms—his big smile, his emphatically jovial gestures, his humor and sense of camaraderie. If he were not such a violent American-hater, he would be the life of any party in California.<sup>88</sup> The dialogue that ensues between Jack and Joaquin offers a crucial contrast between their two characters:

*JM:* Who are you?

*TFJ:* I am Three-Fingered Jack.

*JM:* The bandit.

*TFJ:* Gracias, gracias. I see you once before. You kill miner. Good job. But then you leave him there for me to take his gold. Why you no take his gold, eh?"

*JM:* Because I am no thief.

*TFJ:* No... but you are very fine killer. Tell me amigo, if you no kill for the gold, why you kill, eh?

*JM:* For justice.

*TFJ:* Ah, justice! Against Americano, eh? We hate all gringo, no?

*JM:* No no no, I do not hate all gringo.

*TFJ:* Ha ha ha, amigo I like you. But you are all alone. There are ten of us. We like to make eleven...

Three-Fingered Jack then suggests that if Joaquin wants to kill rich miners for justice without taking the gold, then he and his bandits will be glad to take the gold. Joaquin, unamused with this idea, throws a punch at Jack and rides away. In spite of being punched in the face, Jack clearly appreciates Joaquin's dignity and strength. He shouts, "Adios, señor!" as Murrieta leaves, and says stoutly to his fellow bandit, "There goes a man." In the very next scene, twenty-eight minutes into the film, Joaquin is riding alone in the mountains when he comes across his own "wanted sign." The reward is now up to \$2,000. Murrieta's wanted sign continues to be positioned above a wanted sign for Three-Fingered Jack. Jack's reward remains at \$1,000, so Joaquin has now surpassed the other bandit in terms of his "value" as a target for Anglos.

The juxtaposition of these signs suggests that, in the eyes of the majority Anglo public at least, Murrieta and Three-Fingered Jack are indistinguishable. They are documented, textualized, and mass-produced as embodiments of criminality. They are threats to public safety, targets to be found and destroyed. Joaquin Murrieta may have greater overall value than Three-Fingered Jack, but the wanted signs render them as parallel and essentially interchangeable. Furious, Joaquin rips both signs off the tree, holding them in his hand as he rides away. Joaquin then travels to an Anglo town, enters the sheriff's office, and lays both of the wanted posters on the sheriff's desk. Joaquin is belligerent:

*Joaquin:* What is the meaning of this?

*Sheriff:* Meaning of what?

*Joaquin:* To compare a man like Murrieta with a murderer like Three-Fingered Jack. It is an injustice, señor.

*Sheriff:* Injustice? What business is it of yours?

*Joaquin:* Plenty business! I am Joaquin. (*he points to his head*)

*Sheriff:* The who? The what?

*Joaquin:* Joaquin. Joaquin Murrieta.

The sheriff, suddenly dumbfounded with excitement, grabs his gun and threatens to kill Murrieta. However, as an agent of Anglo statist law, the Production Code prohibited the film from portraying the sheriff as someone against whom rebellion is sanctioned. As such, the sheriff's threat to Joaquin is loyal to the principles of trial by jury: "Make one move and you won't live 'till your trial." Joaquin retorts, "As if I were a murderer. The men I killed were dogs, señor."

Joaquin is clearly less concerned about the sheriff's threat than about his reputation. He is obsessed with the notion that retaliation against Rosita's murderers is not only unsanctioned, it is also criminalized. The sheriff reaches for handcuffs hanging on a wall, and Joaquin throws a knife that pins the sheriff's hand to the wall. It is a nondeadly display of violence, but it is violence against an agent of the state nonetheless. Joaquin then retrieves his knife and binds the sheriff's hands behind his back. He tells the sheriff, "I am very sorry to have to do this to you, señor, but I can see you know nothing about justice." Joaquin self-sanctions his mild violence against the sheriff on the basis that the sheriff *does not understand* the basic principles of justice. The implication here, thirty minutes into the

film, is that Joaquin himself (still) “knows about justice” because he does not kill the sheriff. He operates on biblical principles, an eye for a proverbial eye. Therefore he leaves the sheriff alive, even though the sheriff’s wanted signs have incorrectly tabulated Joaquin as “more” dangerous than Three-Fingered Jack. Ultimately, this scene engrains the notion that Joaquin’s epistemology is fundamentally incompatible with the post-American society. Warner Baxter plays Joaquin as someone with physical prowess and natural intelligence, yet someone incapable of understanding American “law and order.”

This dynamic of incompatible epistemologies is fleshed out in the very next scene, when Joaquin pays a visit to his old American friend, Bill Miller. Because Joaquin has been essentially banished from town, he has not seen Miller in a long time. Miller is surprised to see Joaquin and speaks to him with an empathetic yet instructive tone:

*Joaquin:* Ah, Bill, amigo.

*Bill:* Joaquin! What are you doing here?

*Joaquin:* I just come from the sheriff’s office.

*Bill:* Why’d you go there?

*Joaquin:* Look. I go to ask him some questions. He tried to arrest me.

*Bill:* Did he let you go?

*Joaquin:* No no, but, I am here.

*Bill:* You didn’t kill him, did you?

*Joaquin* (sincerely): Oh Bill, I don’t kill people for no reason.

*Bill* (smiling wide): In this day and age you can’t kill people for any reason. Now, I tried to tell you that the other day at the mission.

Miller’s assertion that no killing is ever sanctionable has a leveling effect, for it addresses both Joaquin’s abusers and Joaquin himself. Bill Miller here embodies the modern man, the moral pioneer, the man who stands above others yet accedes to the power and authority of the modern American state. He is the Anglo viewer’s idealized self-projection, the proxy through whom the audience can attempt compatibility with Joaquin Murrieta. At this moment, the film’s symphonic soundtrack shifts to high minor chords, a sign of the tragic ignorance inherent to Joaquin’s outmoded worldview. Even if Joaquin’s revenge is sanctioned ethically, it is not sanctioned politically. In “this day and age,” only the state can sanction the tooth taken for a tooth.

*Joaquin:* Do you think I did wrong to kill for my Rosita.

*Bill:* I’m not saying you did wrong, but—to kill’s against the law. Now there *was* a time down here where every man ran things his own way. That’s all different now.

*Joaquin:* What do you mean? Do you mean I did wrong to do what I did?

*Bill:* In a way, yes.

*Joaquin:* Well, I don’t understand.

*Bill:* Oh, I know you don’t. But as a friend, I advise you to get.

*Joaquin:* I don’t understand, get...

*Bill:* Get out of this town and stay out until this is all straightened out...

Bill suggests that Joaquin make a new home for himself in the mountains, where he can attempt to start over. Joaquin resists on the grounds that he must stay near town to care for his mother. Naturally, Bill promises to take care of Mrs. Murrieta. Bill also promises to try and “clear [Joaquin’s] name” while the criminalized hero goes into hiding. When Joaquin

decides to go stay with his brother, Bill says, “Now you’re talking sense,” as if to confirm that Joaquin is still capable of being sensible even if he cannot “understand” the logic of the post-pastoral American system.

The film defines “this day and age” not by the American occupation of California and violent disenfranchisement/expulsion of the Latino body politic, but rather by the post-pastoral federalism and ascendancy of state law over biblical morality. In the process of incarnating this conflict between the old ways and the new state through the characters of Joaquin and Bill, the film renders Joaquin as inherently naïve, as incapable of understanding the logic of the new federalized system. Like Robin Hood is to England, this Joaquin is a relic of California’s pastoral age. The underlying implication is that a pastoral Mexican relic is incompatible with modern American California. Given the deportations of so many Mexicans from Southern California in the 1930s, the film suggests that “good Mexicans” like Murrieta are tragically incapable of understanding the new American ways and will inevitably be removed. If they’re capable of “talking sense,” they’ll realize that they need to “get out” and “stay out.”

In the next scene, Joaquin will be driven beyond the capacity to “talk sense.” The setting shifts to the home of Joaquin’s brother, Jose Murrieta. Joaquin is driving a plow, and Jose runs out to the field with a paper in hand. It is a letter from “your friend Bill,” pronouncing that Mrs. Murrieta is doing well, but the wanted signs continue to appear. Joaquin then decides to ride his brother’s mule to the nearest town for a quick errand. Finally, 38 minutes into an 85-minute-film—and well after the issues of justice, revenge, state power, and state-sanctioned violence have been developed in terms of Joaquin’s problematic textual juxtaposition to Three-Fingered Jack—the terminal transformation is upon us. The scene cuts to a bar full of drunken Americans spouting anti-Mexican hatred. The drunkards harass a Mexican customer, but the bartender stands up for him, claiming that “at least he pays for his drinks.” The loudest and brashiest of the Americans, a large man named Pete, shouts back, “Yeah but where does he get the money to pay for it?” Pete storms out of the bar, shouting, “Well what’s good enough for a Mex ain’t good enough for us. Come on, let’s get outta this Mex joint.” The other drunkards follow Pete, their alpha, into the street. Naturally, as the drunken crew leaves the bar, they see Joaquin Murrieta riding his brother’s mule down the street. Pete accuses Joaquin of stealing his mule. Joaquin insists that the mule is his brother’s, causing Pete to grow even more belligerent. A crowd begins to form. Joaquin’s brother comes running into the crowd, insisting that he purchased the mule *from* the very man who accuses him of theft. Pete claims that he never sold the mule, that it was stolen. However, the actor’s gestures, coupled with the implications of the previous scene in the bar, make it clear that Joaquin’s brother is honest and that Pete is lying.

The Anglo mob shouts and jeers. They grab the Murrieta brothers. A policeman enters the hulking crowd and asks them to wait until the sheriff returns before executing the Murrietas. Once again, as statist agent, the policeman accedes to the American framework of trial by jury. He addresses Pete directly, “Now these men are entitled to a fair trial in a court of law. Let the jury decide.” Pete replies, “We’re playing the jury in this case,” and he turns to ask the mob, “Guilty or not guilty?” The mob replies, resoundingly, “Guilty!” A noose drops around the head of Joaquin’s brother. Joaquin pleads, “Is this what you call justice? We have done nothing! My brother is an honest farmer. Look at him! Look, you

can see he would not harm anyone. He—.” But Joaquin is muffled into silence by the mob. They prepare to hang Joaquin as well, but the policeman intervenes: “You can’t hang this man ... he ain’t done anything.” Pete replies, “Maybe you’re right, Marshall, but he ain’t gonna get away with nothing. He’s gonna take thirty nine lashes instead, and I’m gonna lay em on myself!” The scene that follows comes directly from Ridge, the *Police Gazette*, and every other Murrieta narrative to precede *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*. Joaquin’s brother is hung, and Joaquin is beaten to the edge of his life. As with the scene of Rosita’s death, the film expands the scene of Joaquin’s beating and moment of transformation for cinematic pathos. The scene is given only a couple sentences by Ridge and the *Police Gazette*, but the film devotes a full minute to it. The Anglo crowd clearly enjoys the sadistic spectacle.

In the film, Three-Fingered Jack plays a crucial role in Joaquin’s transformation to criminality. Halfway into Joaquin’s beating, Three-Fingered Jack and two other Mexican bandits approach the mob from the periphery of the town square. Though his followers prepare to charge the mob, Jack recognizes Joaquin and orders them to halt. Jack’s facial expression suggests that he believes the beating will push Murrieta onto the bandits’ side. After the beating is done, the Americans return to the bar to have another drink. Three-Fingered Jack and the other Mexicans approach Joaquin, who has been beaten unconscious. They lift him onto a horse and carry him away. When Joaquin awakens, he is at the bandits’ camp, seated next to Three-Fingered Jack. Joaquin, groggy, looks at a strange necklace dangling in the distance, and asks, “What you call those?” Jack replies, “Ears... Chinaman’s ears.” This is the first reference to Chinese people in the film. We see no actual Chinese characters in the film, only this necklace of severed Chinese ears that Jack has strewn above him at the camp. Jack then describes his proclivity for severing ears from the heads of slain Chinese people.

*JM*: You do this for no reason at all?

*TFJ*: I don’t know. Every time I see one, I wanna kill him. I *love* Chinamen.

*JM*: Hmm. How you like me to do this to you?

Jack is startled by the question. He sits back, looks confused, then smiles, laughing gutturally, and says, “But I am not Chinaman.” Joaquin smirks. It is clear that Three-Fingered Jack will not be able to understand Joaquin’s ethics and morals, just as Joaquin cannot seem to understand Bill’s suggestion that murder to avenge murder is wrong. Joaquin discerns that Jack will not comprehend him, so he looks around and changes the subject.<sup>89</sup>

At this point, Joaquin assumes command of the group of Mexicans. This is a pivotal moment in the film narrative. Whereas the books usually reach this point after the first five pages, it takes the full first half of the film for Murrieta to ascend to the “head” of the band and begin plundering the state. Joaquin asks, “Who’s the leader here?” No one replies.

*JM*: Ah, you got no leader. Well, this is trouble. We got to have leader.

*TFJ*: Amigo, I am very fine killer. Americanos have one thousand dollars on my head.

*JM*: This is not enough. They have two thousands dollars on mine. I did not ask to come here, but now that I am here, I am the leader.

Joaquin sanctions his own assumption of command based upon the sums of money noted on the wanted signs. Three-Fingered Jack nods, happy to see Joaquin step up and take the



reins. Joaquin says that he wants good horses and hundreds of men. At first, Jack thinks the scope of Joaquin's vision is too large. But Joaquin is determined:

*JM:* And we must get guns, plenty guns.

*TFJ:* Ah, and then we get gold, plenty gold.

Joaquin's eyes tighten. His tone lowers:

*JM:* I want more than their gold.

*TFJ:* Sure, we kill em! Ah, we kill em all.

*JM:* I will do to them what they have done to me. From one end of California to the other, they will wish they never heard of Joaquin Murrieta.

Warner Baxter's delivery of these final lines is perfect, his finest moment in the entire film. The scene then fades to a herd of horses galloping, Mexican bandits on their backs, gunshots blazing in the background. A relief map of California scrolls from Shasta to San Diego beneath the soundtrack of a galloping mass.<sup>90</sup> At this point, forty-two minutes into the film, the full-scale rebellion has begun. Horses gallop across large plains; horse hooves and gunshots thunder across the state. Mexicans lift aloft their guns, shouting, "Viva Joaquin! Viva Joaquin!"—a moment reminiscent of images and slogans "in the Mexican Revolution" (Hazara 211).

Textuality renders Joaquin a criminal, justifies his assuming command of the bandits, and documents his transformation of a rag-tag group of thieves into an organized resistance army. During the "galopa" scene, a facsimile of the front page of the *Alta Californian* newspaper enters the screen as a minuscule image beneath the horses' feet. Moving as swiftly as the horses, the newspaper image quickly zooms to full screen and "covers" the galloping horses. The "wanted" sign is reprinted in the top corner of the newspaper, and the price on Joaquin's head is still \$2,000. The headline story of the paper reads, "Miners Be Careful!" with the subtitle, "Joaquin Murrieta joins hands with Desperate Bandit Three-Fingered Jack! Band Growing." The text of the story, which can only be read in full by pausing the film, describes the fictionalized buildup of the rebellion in detail, reporting on the growing number of "armed robbers" and "cutthroats" who are rapidly joining with Joaquin. Of course, this newspaper story never existed. The bandit hero's full name, "Joaquin Murrieta," never entered the press until 1852, and he was never identified as the singular leader of the Mexican rebellion until his severed head was delivered as evidence of itself in 1853. And as Nadeau reports, nothing was heard of Three-Fingered Jack between his escape from jail in 1849 and the appearance of his severed hand in 1853, certainly not in a San Francisco newspaper. As a fictionalized documentation of its own retrospective artifactual textuality, the brief appearance of this newspaper in the film is significant in that it directly merges Murrieta and Three-Fingers, implicitly leveling their agendas into one common ideology and teleology that is violently opposed to Anglo American California.

The film's emphasis on textuality and documentation taps into the spirit of the Murrieta archive, where Joaquin's body and all the narratives associated with that body are entirely textual productions. However, the film is wholly unique among Murrieta narratives in not only its use of the Bill Miller character, but also in its deviation from the dubious historical record as well. For example, the Burns novel concludes, naturally, with Harry Love's Rangers killing Murrieta and Three-Fingered Jack in Arroyo Cantua, severing the iconic "head" and "hand," and collecting payment from the state. In contrast, there is no

Harry Love character in the film, and Joaquin is never beheaded. Rather, a steadily growing posse of Anglo settlers hunts Joaquin throughout the second half of the film. And it is ultimately Bill Miller who is forced to kill his good friend Joaquin. These revisions to the ending eliminate the problems of verifying the severed Head in order to retroactively justify the state-sanctioned brutality associated with Harry Love's Rangers, a rather messy conundrum that, if given too much attention on the big screen, might grate against the bowdlerizing demands of the Production Code. Instead, the film locates the conclusive violence upon Murrieta in the hands of this posse of common Anglo settlers.

On one level, Anglo violence against Joaquin is sanctioned by the statist power structure. The rewards on the wanted signs, which climb to a total of \$5,000 for both Murrieta and Three-Fingered Jack by the end of the film, are evidence that the state condones violence targeted at Joaquin and his band. However, on another level, the Anglo posse's violence is sanctioned less by the state of California than by the violent actions of Murrieta's followers. The dynamic created here is not one wherein the Anglo audience "becomes Joaquin"; rather, the audience is prodded to imagine themselves, via their proxy Bill Miller, "becoming like Joaquin." In imagining themselves like Joaquin, the audience is not only led to sympathize with him, but also to accept the logic behind his execution. A primary case in point occurs when Bill Miller's nephew is preparing to be married to a young Anglo woman who is traveling by wagon train to California. Naturally, her caravan is robbed by Murrieta's men. During the heist, Joaquin commands his subordinates not to shoot, but someone ignores the directive and fires a shot into the wagons. The bullet strikes and kills the young woman, a scenario that exemplifies the "injustice to individuals" deplored by Ridge. After this unintentional murder, Joaquin attempts to leave the rest of the bandits. He wants no more part in such unjustified killings. Joaquin, obsessed with justice throughout the film, yearns to rid himself of the unsanctionable violence that has become fastened to his once-personal quest for justice. However, as much as he may desire to distance himself from the senseless violence, it is now too late. The line has been crossed. Bill Miller, who had previously always vindicated Joaquin whenever his name was being disparaged by Anglos, now "becomes like Joaquin" in that Miller assumes the position Joaquin unfortunately found himself in at the beginning of the film—Miller is now a surviving relative of a woman who was executed by entirely unsanctioned violence. Therefore, while Joaquin's own personal morals remain intact at the end, he is unable to separate himself from the unjustifiable actions of his followers. This inability to separate himself from the rest of the violent rebellion is ultimately what provides moral sanction for Miller's execution of his old friend.

The film's "new" ending reinforces the notion of Murrieta's incompatibility with modern American California. After Bill Miller mortally wounds Joaquin with a gunshot, the film charts new territory for a Murrieta narrative: rather than utter his famous last words (some variation of "Don't shoot anymore, the job is finished"), the wounded Joaquin is still agile enough to elude Bill Miller. Joaquin steals Miller's horse and, while dying, rides home to the church graveyard where Rosita is buried. The Anglo posse follows him, but they do not arrest him in the graveyard. They look upon him as he dies, and he seems completely unaware of their presence, as if his entire life was a tragic anomaly. Joaquin tells his buried spouse, "I am so cold, Rosita," echoing her own dying words. Bill Miller and the rest of the

posse watch as Joaquin dies upon Rosita's grave, his head fully intact. In contrast, Jack dies without much pathos. Jack's demeanor remains comical to the end. Even in the death scenes, *The Robin Hood of El Dorado* manages to find a hint of comic relief in the notoriously sadistic Three-Fingered Jack.

William Wellman's MGM film attempts to completely ameliorate the charges of racism that the original Ridge novel lodges against the Anglo posses. The film encourages its audiences to find consolation in the fact that Joaquin dies peacefully. The bandit hero is an anachronism to the end, ever devoted to his murdered wife but incapable of reconciling himself with the paradigms of the modern United States. Joaquin's head remains un mutilated, its "noble" thoughts still unaware of the full realities of its surroundings. After leaving the cinema, the film's Depression-era viewers would do what the tragically doomed bandit hero could never imagine. They would leave the outmoded world of pastoral romance and (re-)enter the industrial reality. The film encourages viewers to understand why Joaquin does what he does, but it also serves as the culmination of eight decades of evolving Anglocentric post-Ridge Murrieta narratives in that it uses Murrieta's own paradigm of revenge—"I will do to them what they have done to me"—as vindication of Anglo California's dismemberment and eradication of a supposedly anachronistic Mexican populace for whom Joaquin remains the symbolic head.

### **Conclusions: Anglophone California and the Present Perfect Murrieta**

My analysis of the evolution of Joaquin's criminality and Jack's attendant comedy in Anglophone Californian narratives between the Gold Rush and the Great Depression does not ignore the fact that unprecedented changes occurred in California and the world during these eighty years. I do not mean to suggest to that industrial "progress" was an illusion or that the social upheavals which accompanied swift and rampant industrialization did not produce lasting effects. However, I reject the evolving gringo notion that Murrieta's narrative enacts dynamics of a completely bygone era. It is a notion reflected in the present perfect verbs employed by Walter Noble Burns in the final paragraph of *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*:

So the red legend of the outlaw chief of California's Age of Gold draws to a close. All the actors in the lurid drama have faded into the shadows of oblivion. [...] Farms and homes, towns and cities, crowd the scenes of their wild adventures. The terrible Joaquin Murrieta of old days has become a tale told in the twilight or a song sung to a guitar. (304)

Whereas Burns describes American "homes" and "cities" in the present tense, Joaquin and his "actors" are described in the present perfect. The implication here is that the end of Murrieta's "wild" life parallels the definitive end of a pre-American set of social dynamics. In order to produce an escapist narrative for Depression-era audiences, Burns's novel insists that a clear break with the past has occurred. Without this break, the narrative loses its escapist dimensions. However, while the massive industrialization of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was no illusion, the notion that there was an intractable post-Murrieta rise of legal equality and judicial impartiality is entirely illusory. The racialized

disenfranchisement of Mexicans and other minority groups in California has surely continued. Productions like *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*, both the novel and the film, enable the mass amnesia of many Californians who refuse to acknowledge that there has been no definitive break in the development of social inequalities caused by Americanization in the mid-nineteenth century.

The notion that a modern American social system has effectively and entirely removed the social systems that came before is a manifestation of a narrative paradigm that is all too familiar to scholars of Native American studies. Illusions of mutual exclusion and cultural incompatibility have long fueled American policy toward Native peoples. Fictions of permanent Native disappearance, what Timothy Powell terms “discursive removal,” have circulated through all levels of American society for centuries (28). Yet it is precisely these kinds of discursive removals that dupe American audiences into believing that there is a physical vacancy which can be voyeuristically occupied. These voyeuristic processes—what Philip Deloria terms “playing Indian” and what Shari Huhndorf terms “going native”—are reliant upon these dominant American fictions of Native discontinuity and/or extinction. A similar dynamic is evident in the Americanization of Joaquin Murrieta in the early-twentieth century. Audiences can “become like Joaquin” during the course of a 300-page book or an 85-minute film. They can voyeuristically occupy the subject-positions of Joaquin’s followers, escaping from the depressing realities of the failed promises of modern industry, precisely because of the illusion of discontinuity.

The irony of Three-Fingered Jack’s role in this process of Americanizing the Murrieta narrative is evident in the title of this chapter. Whereas Ridge’s protagonist “would much like ... to see Three-Fingered Jack” when he needs to commit an act of egregious violence that he would prefer to delegate to his remorseless captain, *The Robin Hood of El Dorado* encourages its audiences to want to see Three-Fingered Jack for different reasons. Because of Jack’s now-humorous disposition, American audiences may want to see him to provide comic relief. And because of the heavy pathos involved in Joaquin’s transformation into a criminal, American audiences may want to see Three-Fingered Jack’s violence as confirmation that the Mexican rebellion was dependent upon uncontrollable sadism, thereby sanctioning American violence against Murrieta, in particular, and the Mexican body politic, in general. But perhaps most importantly, because the ability to “see Three-Fingered Jack” has *always* been inseparable from the creation of the idea of “Joaquin Murrieta” in the popular Anglophone imagination, American audiences may want to see Three-Fingered Jack because the ability to momentarily and vicariously join Murrieta’s romanticized rebellion is still dependent upon Jack’s visible presence. Ironically, post-Ridge Anglophone Murrieta narratives encourage their audiences to want to see Three-Fingered Jack in spite of, and indeed because of, the fact that Jack wants to kill them without any concern for justice.

## Chapter Four

### “I Am the Masses of My People”: Joaquin as Latino Liberation Hero

Maybe the Robin Hood part of the legend has persisted for so long among Mexicans because Mexicans felt they had a share in Murrieta’s victimization; thus perhaps a share in Murrieta’s revenge. (*Rodriguez* 138)

Whoever approaches the truth or legend of this bandit will feel the charismatic force of his gaze. (*Neruda*, Foreword)

In the previous chapter, I argued that American publications simultaneously romanticize and criminalize Joaquin Murrieta. I explained how the California government presented the fictional narrative of Murrieta’s absent body in relation to the pre-existing and historicized body of the violent criminal, “Three-Fingered Jack.” I claimed that John Rollin Ridge’s fictional biography articulates Murrieta’s notion of justice, and sanctions retaliatory violence to avenge injustice, in contradistinction to the malicious and unjustifiable violence perpetrated by Three-Fingered Jack. I argued that Murrieta’s criminalized identity within the geo-cultural space of the expansive United States evolves from generation to generation in tandem with Three-Fingered Jack’s evolution from an inexplicably violent character in the *California Police Gazette* to a malicious, yet comedic, character in *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*. Most importantly, the air of validity these texts give to American violence against the Mexican body politic evolves in conjunction with the changes evident in Three-Fingered Jack. I contend that these post-Ridge mutations of the bandit leader and his most notorious captain, in spite of (indeed, because of) the generational changes in characterization, reveal a consistent Anglocentric paradigm of exclusion wherein Joaquin and his bandits are portrayed as inherently incompatible with the culture and legal system of American California.

These Anglocentric American publications are, of course, only one-half of the story. Joaquin is a bilingual character with a dual life—in English, he is a criminalized relic of a bygone era; but in Spanish, he is a people’s hero whose story is continuously relevant to the present moment. As long as the United States and its expansive culture exert a controlling influence over the Americas, the story of Joaquin Murrieta lives on. Because Murrieta embodies both victimization by and resistance to U.S. imperialism, Anglo American publications have a vested interest in relegating his narrative to the past, ultimately framing the dark hero as an anachronism that is inevitably incongruent with the modern world. But from a Latinocentric perspective, the story of unjust relations between the U.S. and its Hispanophone neighbors is hardly a relic of the past. Rather, it is a continuous narrative. For many Latino writers who revisit and reimagine Joaquin Murrieta, the events of the U.S.-Mexican War and the California Gold Rush signify not an end to a pre-modern pastoral age, but rather the beginning of a racially charged campaign by the U.S. to dominate Latin America economically and culturally. As such, Murrieta is as relevant *now* as he ever was.

He marks the beginning of a resistance to U.S. culture and policy that, according to Palazón Mayoral and Maria Rosa, signifies both the formation of a Latino consciousness and the notion of a transcontinental *Raza* nation.<sup>91</sup> When seen through a Latin American lens, Joaquin Murrieta is not a pre-modern anachronism, but rather a proto-postmodern hero. Moreover, he is always relevant to the present.

In the Latin American canon of Murrieta narratives, the degree to which Joaquin and his story are “alive” in the present varies dramatically from one text to another. A survey of Latino Murrieta narratives indicates that there are two crucially important points of narrative variation in terms of Joaquin’s continuity: the severed head and the role of Tresdedos (Three-Fingered Jack). In some versions, such as the Mexican corrido and Rodolfo Gonzales’s *I Am Joaquin*, the hero was never killed by the Americans, and the head was never severed from the body. Curiously, there is no Three-Fingered Jack in these versions. In contrast, Latino productions of the narrative that acknowledge Murrieta’s death and beheading in 1853 seem to *depend* upon Three-Fingered Jack as a means of connecting the Latino masses to Murrieta’s absent body. For example, in the most influential narrative of this variety, Pablo Neruda’s *Fulgor y Muerte de Joaquin Murieta (Splendor and Death of Joaquin Murieta)*, the body of Joaquin is perpetually absent whereas the body of Tresdedos is present in every scene. Likewise, Ireneo Paz and Adolfo Carrillo, while rendering entirely different visions of Murrieta than does Neruda, position Murrieta’s narrative body in relation to the Latino masses by revisiting and revising the character of Three-Fingered Jack. In contrast to the Anglocentric tradition of Murrieta narratives, which ultimately validate the anti-Mexican violence perpetrated by Anglo Californians, these Latinocentric versions generally validate Murrieta’s anti-American violence as a necessary component of an anti-imperialist movement.

As is the case in the Anglo-American versions, these Latino incarnations involve substantial revision and omission in order to vindicate and lend cultural sanction to racialized violence. While Latinocentric productions of the narrative tend to operate from a markedly different paradigm than their Anglocentric cousins, they nonetheless demonstrate a pattern strikingly similar to the one that I identified in the previous chapter. Although the violence that these narratives condone is the inverse of the violence sanctioned by Anglo-American productions, the dynamics between Three-Fingered Jack and notions of justified racialized violence remain consistent. Latino writers manipulate (or conveniently omit) Three-Fingered Jack in order to endorse Murrieta’s rebellion and provide justification for violence against Americans.

As with the previous chapter, my purpose here is not to validate violence perpetuated by either side. Rather, my concern is how the post-Ridge narrative is manipulated in order to imagine a public and to justify the nationalized and racialized violence enacted by that public. Inevitably, questions of the hero’s absent body and narrative subjectivity—questions put in motion by the Ridge novel—mark all versions of the story. Because Latino productions tend to emphasize Joaquin’s continual relevance to the present, Latinocentric manipulations of the hero’s subjectivity and the narrative function of Three-Fingered Jack reveal a preoccupation with bringing Joaquin “back” into the present. How Joaquin transcends time and space to affect and reflect the present conditions of the masses is remarkably different in each of the texts that I will analyze in this chapter, especially in the

iconic late-1960s liberation narratives of Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales and Pablo Neruda. But in spite of their differences, each of the texts addressed in the pages that follow—Paz, the corrido, Gonzales, Carrillo, and Neruda—demonstrates the dilemmas facing Latino writers who attempt to frame Murrieta as a people’s hero rather than as a mere criminal. I will explore how each writer triangulates Joaquin’s liberatory ethos with the senseless violence inscribed into the archive by Ridge and the *California Police Gazette*. By examining Three-Fingered Jack, in particular, I intend to demonstrate the underlying parallelism between the Anglocentric and Latinocentric productions in terms of textual manipulation and the “popular imagination” which, according to Luis Leal, is the “true creator” of the Murrieta myth (Introduction xl). Ultimately, I will demonstrate how Three-Fingered Jack is revised, transformed, and even omitted entirely in order to both *present* the absent body of the ambiguous “Joaquin Murrieta” and to render heroic his anti-American violence. Just as the Ridge novel enables a critical archival perspective on the evolution of Murrieta’s criminality in an Anglo context, recognizing Ridge’s latent impact upon these Latino narratives enables a more complex understanding of how Murrieta transforms from an absent criminal body into a Latino people’s hero. By analyzing how Ridge’s narrative template is altered in these notable twentieth-century productions, I explore the philosophical quandaries that Three-Fingered Jack presents to Latino writers who must claim him as one of their own. In particular, I will explore these dynamics in narratives produced in Mexico, the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, and Chile.

### **Murrieta in Mexico: Ireneo Paz’s Subtle Reconfigurations of Three-Fingered Jack**

Murrieta’s textual body was codified in Hispanophone literary culture when the 1859 *California Police Gazette* version of the narrative was quickly pirated and reprinted in Spanish in Spain and Chile. Yet in all of its various nineteenth-century plagiarisms, spin-offs, and reprintings, the Murrieta narrative was not published in book form on Mexican soil until Ireneo Paz’s 1904 publication, *Vida y aventuras del más célebre bandido sonorense, Joaquín Murrieta: sus grandes proezas en California (Life and Adventures of the Celebrated Sonoran Bandit Joaquin Murrieta: His Exploits in the State of California)*.<sup>22</sup> Although published in Mexico, the Paz production makes very few alterations to the typical Anglocentric narrative. Paz’s account is, like the French and Spanish productions in the 1860s, almost entirely plagiarized from the *Police Gazette*. Paz’s decision to reprint the Murrieta narrative in Mexico City was “moved undoubtedly by the desire to reintegrate [Joaquin] into Mexico” (Leal, Introduction xlvii). Despite the blatancy of Paz’s plagiarism, the book is “significant in bringing Murrieta to Mexican readers for the first time” (Irwin 61). Paz makes very few alterations to the *California Police Gazette* version, “merely retouch[ing] the text to recover the Mexican nationality of Murrieta” (Leal, Introduction xxxv). However, unlike the Roberto Hyenne and Professor Acigar plagiarisms of a previous generation, the Paz version makes a few substantial changes, all of which point toward the problem Tresdedos poses for the larger goal of “reclaiming Murrieta as Mexican” (Irwin 61).

As is always the case with Three-Fingered Jack, whose name in Spanish is “Tresdedos” or “Jack Tresdedos,” issues of sanctioned violence are brought into sharp relief

by Paz's alteration of Jack's character in contrast to earlier representations. Post-*Police Gazette* Murrieta narratives published in California tend to sanction Californian violence against Murrieta, even while romanticizing his character or reminiscing nostalgically about the past. In contrast, the Ireneo Paz version subtly attempts to explain Jack's violence. In doing so, Paz renders a Tresdedos who serves a similar function to the Bill Miller character in Walter Noble Burns's 1932 novel in English, *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*: both become proxies for the author's target audience. Whereas Burns's Miller serves as a proxy for Anglo audiences looking for vindication of white-on-brown racialized violence, Paz's Tresdedos serves as a proxy for Mexican audiences concerned about the reasons for Jack's remorseless violence. Paz attempts to tunnel the minefield of Jack's psychopathic "nature" by subtly reconfiguring the connections between Jack and the larger Mexican body politic, a dynamic which becomes evident upon a close reading of the Paz novel in comparison with the Ridge novel and the *Police Gazette*.

On occasion, Paz reinserts lines from the original Ridge text that were excised in the *Police Gazette's* spin-off, generating greater empathy for Joaquin and subordinating Three-Fingered Jack's actions to Joaquin's unifying ideology of justice. Paz's most significant reclamation of a Ridge detail comes during the gathering of the bandit masses at Arroyo Cantua halfway into the novel. Whereas the *Police Gazette* eliminates Joaquin's grandiose speech to the masses, where he promises to avenge the wrongs done to "our poor, bleeding country" (Ridge 75), the Paz version takes the speech from the Ridge version and grafts it back onto the basic *Police Gazette* narrative. This is significant because, by having Joaquin identify a victorious return to Mexico as his ultimate goal, Paz utilizes Ridge's heroicizing rhetoric in order to stoke the nationalistic sentiments of his own Mexican readership. Joaquin's speech serves as an ideological umbrella under which all of the bandits' various exploits are amalgamated and unified. While such unity is fleeting in Ridge's novel, it nonetheless demonstrates an effort to subordinate the actions of every satellite bandit to Joaquin's ideology and vision. Thus, as in the Ridge novel, Three-Fingered Jack's sadism signifies an "internal" problem that the liberatory movement must attempt to correct. This internal problem is amplified by the book's publication in Mexico for a primarily Mexican audience. The need to reckon with Jack's grotesque violence as an essential limb in the body of Joaquin's liberation philosophy becomes more urgent for Paz's readership, even if reconciliation is never actually achieved in Paz's book itself. This quality of the Paz novel is a direct contrast to the *Police Gazette*, where Joaquin's occasional endorsement of Jack's unjustifiable violence suggests the rebellion's lack of a centralized coordinating principle of justice.

In addition to Paz's occasional reclamation and reinsertion of certain details from Ridge, there are also several instances where Paz adds a minor detail, often in the form of a lone additional sentence or a slight alteration of syntax, in order to further justify the rebellion. Like the reinsertion of Ridge materials, these seemingly minor revisions in the Paz version speak to the sensibilities of Paz's Mexican readership and the pursuant need to empathize with Joaquin. For example, a salient point of variation between the *Police Gazette* and Paz versions comes immediately after the death of Joaquin's spouse and brother. As the *Police Gazette* transitions away from the deaths, there is no reference to Joaquin's mental or



emotional state. Rather, the *Police Gazette* focuses solely on the results of this transformative brutality:

The soul of Joaquin now became shadowed with despair and deadly passion; but still, although he thirsted for revenge, he felt himself as yet unable to accomplish anything, and would not endanger his freedom and his life in attempting to destroy single-handed, the fiendish murderers of his wife and brother. (CPG 5)

By foregrounding Joaquin's response to American violence, the *Police Gazette* emphasizes his transformation into an irredeemable criminal, as per its idiom. In contrast, Paz opens with an empathetic reflection, removes the phrase "deadly passion," and replaces "attempting to destroy single-handed" with "imprudence":

It is easy to imagine the desperation and the thirst for vengeance which agitated the heart of Joaquin when he came to himself and saw what had happened. But while that grief was torturing his soul, he felt himself incapable of fighting alone against the murderers of his wife and brother. One imprudence might cost him dearly. (Paz 7)

While Paz's edits are to some degree merely cosmetic changes, they are also clearly indicative of the texts' starkly different ideological trajectories and modes of engagement with readers. The *Police Gazette* has no desire to have its Anglophone American audiences "imagine the desperation" that Joaquin must have felt; rather, the *Police Gazette* wants its audience to focus on Joaquin's obsession with retaliating against these "fiendish murders" with more of the same. In contrast, Paz's Mexican audiences in 1904 could relate to the experiences of someone abused by Americans. Readers would be able to sympathize with stories of families torn apart because of racist violence north of the border.

Paz's most significant alterations to the *Police Gazette* version involve Three-Fingered Jack. As with the reinsertion of Joaquin's speech to the masses at Arroyo Cantua, the Paz novel revises a dispute between Three-Fingered Jack and Mountain Jim in order to subordinate Jack's agenda to that of Joaquin's. This scene never appears in the Ridge version and was invented entirely by the *Police Gazette*. To appreciate the impact of Paz's revisions, I will briefly explicate the *Police Gazette's* rendition of the scene. It is a particularly important moment in terms of "the masses of my people" because it engages the possibility of Anglo inclusion within the masses of the Mexican rebellion. Three-Fingered Jack announces that "no American should be allowed to visit the headquarters, or be entrusted with the secrets of the band" (CPG 27). This remark is directed toward Mountain Jim, an American renegade who has joined with Murrieta's bandits.<sup>93</sup> Mountain Jim replies that "although he was a Yankee by birth, he was a Mexican at heart, and felt more interest in the welfare of the band, than he who had joined merely to satisfy his craving for blood" (CPG 27). Jack pulls out his gun, replies with fiery insults, and Joaquin intervenes just in time to stop Jack and Jim from killing each other. Joaquin orders them to stand down. Mountain Jim answers Joaquin's call: "With all my heart . . . I willingly obey the order of our chief" (CPG 27). Three-Fingered Jack "growls" back, "But I do not!" (CPG 27). Joaquin nearly kills Jack for these words, but Clarina intervenes, urging Joaquin not to murder anyone. Jack's life is spared, but his reluctance to subordinate himself to Joaquin reflects the *Police Gazette's* larger goal of portraying a violent gang of bandits without an overriding ethical center to guide their rebellion, ultimately sanctioning the violence perpetrated by agents of the state in order to eliminate this apparently chaotic and morally uncentered banditry.

In contrast, while the Paz version delivers the same scene, it alters Jack's lines substantially. Just before Jack's lines, Paz presents a shortened version of Mountain Jim's reply to Jack's insistence on Mexican "secrets," reducing the American's eloquence and apparent selflessness: Paz's Mountain Jim declares, "With pleasure ... I obey my chief's orders" (Paz 35). By changing the *Gazette's* "our chief" to "my chief," Paz implies that it is Mountain Jim, rather than Three-Fingered Jack, who is ultimately motivated by self-interest rather than group cohesion. In addition, Paz gives greater emphasis to Three-Fingered Jack's capacity to "understand" the situation and envision himself as a subordinate satellite within the constellation of Joaquin's rebellion. Instead of growling, Paz's Tresdedos simply "yells": "'One moment,' yelled Jack. 'That is not the way I understand the thing'" (Paz 35). Whereas the *Police Gazette* renders Jack as an agent of an animalistic and uncontrollable rebellion, the Paz version shapes him into an agent of reflection, indicated by his desire to put the handgun drama aside for "one moment" and think matters through. While the changes to this pivotal scene are minor, they present a salient example of how Paz alters the *Police Gazette's* portrayal of Three-Fingered Jack in a moment of potential violence, subtly changing the narrative in order to make Jack's disposition seem more "understandable" and less objectionable to readers in Mexico City.

While he softens Jack's temperament somewhat, Paz never attempts to sanction Jack's violence against Chinese people. Like Ridge, Paz contrasts Jack's unjustified violence upon Chinese victims to Joaquin's often-justified violence upon Americans. His anti-Chinese racism notwithstanding, however, Three-Fingered Jack is not presented as an entirely self-serving racist renegade in the Paz version. Rather, in his subordination to Joaquin, Three-Fingered Jack is rendered as one of "us" for Paz's Mexican audience. For example, roughly halfway into the *Police Gazette*, Jack and Joaquin pass a group of Chinese miners who had just been robbed by someone else. Three-Fingered Jack "manifested a considerable anxiety in regard to their health and happiness, and thinking they looked very thin and miserable, desired to relieve them of the burden and troubles of life" (CPG 45). Joaquin responds by redirecting Jack's bloodlust: "but Joaquin commanded him to ride on and wait till he could use his knife on the Americans" (CPG 45). Joaquin seems to give Jack implicit sanction to exercise his violent inclinations, merely redirecting him to stay focused on the American targets. In contrast to Ridge's depiction, Paz's version of this scene emphasizes Joaquin's morality and Jack's acquiescence to his leader on these grounds:

Jack Three Fingers could not keep from showing his anxiety on seeing them so weak and miserable. He would have liked to free them from such a sad existence, but Joaquin ordered him to curb his sanguinary desires. Jack conformed with his chief's orders, but not with a good grace. Our man was anti-Chinese by nature and nothing would have been more pleasant than to skin a number of those inoffensive beings. Nevertheless, knowing his obligations, he obeyed Joaquin's command without a murmur. (Paz 63)

By claiming Tresdedos with a collective pronoun—"our man"—before introducing his disturbingly racist "nature," the Paz version does not forgive or sanction Jack's "sanguinary desires," but it does acknowledge these issues as internal problems that a Mexican morality, as embodied by Joaquin, must work to rectify.

In the very next scene, Joaquin thwarts a mutiny threatened by the Mexican traitor Florencio. When discussing the *Police Gazette* version of this scene in detail in the previous chapter, I focus on how Joaquin's "bad humor" induces him to drop the yoke and let Jack slaughter a group of Chinese miners. The *Police Gazette* lingers over Jack's "savage delight" in "splitting their skulls and severing their neck-joints," emphasizing the gory details of Jack's criminal actions: "cutting and slashing as if it gave him the most intense satisfaction to revel in human agony" (CPG 46). In contrast, the Paz version removes this barrage of violent details. Instead, Paz emphasizes Jack's actions in terms of a struggle between human reason and animalistic violence:

Florencio's rebellion had put Joaquin in a bad humor. He gave the sign to Jack Three Fingers, who hurled himself upon the unfortunate Chinamen, and one by one he buried his sword in their hearts. His eyes shone with pleasure as he did it, making him appear more like a wild beast who was satisfying himself with the blood of his victims, than a human being endowed with reason. (Paz 64)

Though Paz reproduces the term "bad humor," he refers to Florencio's actions as a "rebellion," rather than as "mutinous conduct" as in the *Police Gazette* (CPG 46). This word choice has significant implications, for it implies that Murrieta's rebellion will likewise put his Anglo enemies in a dangerously "bad humor."

Even though Joaquin sanctions Jack's violent assault upon Chinese people in the above instance, Paz revises the *Police Gazette* to imply that Jack's violence is analogous to the arbitrary and unjustified violence done to Joaquin and his family. By describing the Chinese people as "unfortunate," Paz deviates from the *Police Gazette* and echoes the moralizing of Ridge's novel by sympathizing with the Chinese victims. More specifically, by having Jack stab these Chinese victims in the heart, Paz literally portrays them as people whose hearts have been broken by completely irrational violence. In this way, Paz subtly equates Jack's Chinese victims with Joaquin himself; for as all versions of the Murrieta narrative make clear, Joaquin's own heart was irrevocably wounded by violent abuse. Paz subtly prods his Mexican audience to frown upon Jack's actions, and implicitly urges them to consider how such absurdly violent tendencies could be restrained in a rational society. Clearly, that society does not exist in California in 1850, but Paz subtly suggests that such a society could exist in Mexico in 1904. Indeed, the seeds of change were sprouting across Mexico at the time and growing into the Mexican Revolution that would begin in 1910.

Paz's most important revision to the Three-Fingered Jack character comes during the comical scene when Jack kills a grizzly bear threatening to attack a group of women. In the *Police Gazette* version, Jack is remembering a young love, a woman who ultimately rejected him. The *Police Gazette* locates Jack's transformation into an agent of "cruel and bloodthirsty desires" with the rejection of his affections (CPG 62). In contrast, the Paz version uses this mostly comical scene to drastically reconfigure the roots of Jack's twisted mental state. As in the *Police Gazette*, Jack saves the women and offers a vague explanation: "I was just thinking of another woman"; "my presence in this place is due to a sentimental thought" (Paz 83). However, Paz's Jack is not recalling a girl who rejected him long ago. Rather, Paz's Jack reminisces "about the happy days of his youth and the woman whom he had loved with all his heart" (Paz 83). After Jack rescues the women from the bear, Paz writes, "For the first time in many years a smile spread over Jack's usually fierce and unfeeling face—poor Jack,

who had committed such crimes to avenge the death of his own sweetheart” (Paz 83). Paz explicitly locates the death of a loved one as the root of violent transformations experienced by both Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack. The murder of Jack’s lover suggests that Jack’s original transformation and ensuing violent “nature” stem from sources that are ultimately “understandable.” If readers can “easily understand” why Joaquin would turn criminal after the murder of his spouse, then certainly Jack’s turn to criminality is likewise comprehensible, in spite of its extreme nature. In contrast to Paz, the *Police Gazette* locates Jack’s sadistic transformation in a shallow rejection of his affections, implying that Jack was fated to be a criminal against whom the state must employ violence as a means of defending the general peace. While Paz never sanctions Jack’s sadistic inclinations, he nonetheless rationalizes the original causes of the transformation through their parallels with Joaquin’s own story. Furthermore, the Paz scenario is one in which senseless and unjustifiable violence develops as a response to violence itself—murder begets murder, and the cycle threatens to continue indefinitely.

Although the Ireneo Paz version is “based closely on one of the most anti-Mexican English-language versions of the legend,” Paz’s minor revisions speak volumes about the dilemmas of reclaiming Murrieta as a Mexican icon (Irwin 64). As originally designed by Ridge, Joaquin Murrieta’s narrative vindication is molded around Three-Fingered Jack’s brutality; and Joaquin’s own degree of justification is dramatized through his attempts to control Jack’s destructive impulses. In its attempts to reclaim some of the original spirit of the Ridge novel while reproducing Murrieta for a specifically Mexican audience, Paz’s novel deliberately alters its representation of Three-Fingered Jack in order to evoke sympathy and self-reflection in its readers, rather than to simply offer evidence of criminality like the *Police Gazette*.

As a final case in point, the *Police Gazette* concludes by asserting that “facts have been given, and though perhaps colored, they are nevertheless facts” regarding the “victims of Joaquin” and the death of the chief victimizer himself (CPG 116). In contrast, the Paz novel concludes with the “curious fact” that “Rosa, Herminia and Anita Murrieta,” all of whom were living “in the city of Los Angeles” in 1904, were identified as blood nieces of Joaquin himself (Paz 138). Of course, Paz has no concrete evidence to support this claim regarding the identities of Joaquin’s brother’s children, any more than the *Police Gazette* has concrete evidence to support its claims to factuality. But Paz’s ending suggests that the problems that caused and resulted from Joaquin’s experiences in American California did not reach a point of finality with his supposed beheading. Rather, Paz insists that Murrieta’s descendants live on, and with them live memories of Joaquin. Unlike the illusions of incompatibility between the Mexican past and American present that *The Robin Hood of El Dorado* would peddle to Depression-era American audiences, the Ireneo Paz novel ends with a syncretic and continuous connection between the past and present. Paz insists on a dynamic consciousness of ancestral descent and cultural continuity. Like all of Paz’s audience throughout greater Mexico, Joaquin’s literal (and literary) descendants must continue to grapple with questions of senseless violence and questionable retaliation against an often unjust and contradictory Anglo society.

**“I Don’t Like White Beans Poches”:  
Adolfo Carrillo’s Jack Tresdedos and the Dilemma of Californiano Assimilation**

The onset of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 catalyzed reflections on group identity and cohesion among Mexican-American writers in the 1910s and 1920s. Prior to the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican-American literary community was concerned largely with assimilation. “Beginning in 1912, however, with the arrival of numerous political refugees and thousands of Mexican farmworkers and laborers attracted by the agricultural and industrial boom, a revival of [Mexican] culture took place” among the Mexican-American literati (Leal, “Pre-Chicano Literature” 76). Several journalists exiled from Mexico took up residence in California during the 1910s, and their writings in California frequently questioned the classism they perceived in the efforts to assimilate to American culture (Leal, “Pre-Chicano” 76). Many of these writers published their work exclusively in Spanish through small presses operated by Mexican exiles, such as the exiled journalist Adolfo Carrillo. A native of Jalisco, Mexico, Carrillo founded *La Prensa (The Press)* in Los Angeles in 1912 and helped to foster literary engagement with problems and tensions concerning assimilation (Chabrán and Chabrán 368).<sup>94</sup> This transborder interest in Spanish-language stories by Mexican writers in California prompted Ireneo Paz to republish his Hispanophone Murrieta novel in Los Angeles in 1919, an event which “sparked a certain degree of interest in the Murrieta legend among Mexican Americans” (Irwin 77). The Murrieta narrative struck a chord with Carrillo. The exiled writer included a piece titled “Joaquin Murrieta” in his 1922 short story collection, *Cuentos Californianos*. Carrillo’s story, although it diverges radically from the mainline archival narrative published by Paz, offers valuable insight into the Latinocentric evolution of Three-Fingered Jack during the transformative period of the early twentieth century.

Through the dynamics between Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack, Carrillo suggests that the initiation of Joaquin’s violent rebellion is inseparable from the anti-gringo Mexican nationalist sentiment embodied by Jack. In Carrillo’s story, Joaquin immigrates to California not with his spouse, but rather with his mother and his sister. And in Carrillo’s reconfiguration of the narrative, it is Joaquin’s “virginal sister,” rather than his spouse, who is raped and murdered by Irish-American *gambusinos* (Huerta 2). As usual, Joaquin vows revenge, but Carrillo alters earlier narratives in terms of *how* Joaquin exacts his revenge. Whereas Ridge, the *Police Gazette*, Paz, and nearly everyone else to inscribe the Murrieta narrative insists that Joaquin single-handedly kills the Americans who traumatize his family, Carrillo’s story renders a Joaquin who is incapable of carrying out his revenge without the assistance of Three-Fingered Jack. After the rape and murder, Joaquin travels to “a worker’s quarters for Mexicans” on a ranch in Solano County, where he “revealed his plans” to Jack Tresdedos, the legendary “horse thief and cattle rustler” (Huerta 3). “Twenty four hours later,” Joaquin and Jack track down the Anglos who raped and murdered his sister (Huerta 3). The description of their “revenge” is rather ghastly: they mutilate the leader of the group, cutting off his tongue and penis, gouging out his eyes, and “grilling” him alive over a fire (Huerta 4). After removing the hearts of the rest of the gang, Joaquin “left his name carved” into their “dismembered cadavers” (Huerta 4). Joaquin and Jack then leave the scene, traveling to Olema to enjoy a brief respite on the “expansive Pacific Ocean, whose waves

sparkled with the rays of a rising sun” (Huerta 4). Carrillo metaphorically suggests that Joaquin’s grotesque revenge is the dawn of a new day, the fiery sun superseding the tranquility of the peaceful water. Yet it is also clear that Joaquin does not inaugurate a new day of anti-Anglo retaliation without assistance. Indeed, Murrieta’s realization of personal revenge—and by association, the potential to realize collective revenge against the traumas that Mexicans have endured at the hands of Anglos—is dependent upon Three-Fingered Jack.

Carrillo complicates Joaquin’s abilities to negotiate the hostile world of American California through his portrayal of the hero’s degrees of tolerance toward Mexicans who appear sympathetic to the U.S. (the *pochos* with whom Carrillo and his Hispanophone contemporaries were so frequently concerned). Joaquin mandates that his followers never “give shelter to the gringos,” and any Mexican who did would be “hanged without mercy” (Huerta 5). Through his commands to his followers, Joaquin appears to occupy an inflexibly anti-American perspective, one that has zero tolerance for American sympathizers. This intolerance changes dramatically, however, when Joaquin becomes enamored of a Californiana named Lina Solano. Three-Fingered Jack distrusts Lina completely, insisting that “she belongs to a family of renegades,” for “her uncle, el señor Vallejo, was one of the ones that delivered California to the gringos” (Huerta 8). Although Joaquin believes that Lina would “give her life for [him],” Three-Fingered Jack disagrees, noting that Lina “wipes her mouth on a handkerchief” after kissing Joaquin, a sign that, as he says, she “doesn’t love you the way you love her” (Huerta 8). Jack claims, “I don’t like white beans *poches*,” suggesting that assimilationist Mexicans who appease the Americans are “puddle snakes” (Huerta 8). Jack insists that Joaquin “forget” his *poche* girlfriend and “return to Mexico,” noting that some of Joaquin’s own followers are beginning to question his ability to command the rebellion because of his love for Lina, the “*poche*” (Huerta 8). Through this tension between the American-sympathizing Vallejo/Solano family and the anti-American sentiments among working-class Mexican immigrants, Carrillo’s story positions Joaquin between the twin forces of assimilation and resistance. Carrillo writes, “the bandit, like all lovers, didn’t listen to the advice of Tresdedos,” suggesting that if Joaquin had aligned himself unflinchingly with the anti-assimilationist resistance, then he would not have been captured and beheaded (Huerta 8). The story concludes when Lina informs her father of Joaquin and Jack’s whereabouts, prompting her father to inform the Governor of California. The Governor sends the Rangers to intercept Joaquin and Jack. Naturally, Joaquin’s head is severed and exhibited in “one of the museums in San Francisco” (Huerta 9). The implication is that Joaquin’s attraction to the daughter of a gringo-friendly Californio family is ultimately what seals his fate. In this way, Carrillo’s “moral” to the story is radically different than the one implied by Paz, wherein Joaquin’s dependence upon the brutal methodology embodied by Jack is at the root of his ultimate demise.

While Carrillo’s narrative seems to vindicate an anti-assimilationist ethos, Mexican scholar Miguel Lopez Rojo suggests that Carrillo’s personal politics were actually torn between criticism of American expansionist values and criticism “against the leaders of the vanquished society: the Californio missionaries and patriarchs who were so idealized by other Hispanic and Anglo writers” (Rojo, *Introducción*, 12-13).<sup>95</sup> Carrillo’s reconfiguration of the Murrieta narrative reflects the larger changes occurring in the Mexican-American

literary consciousness during the early-twentieth century, prior to the mass deportations of Mexican nationals that would come in the 1930s (and serve as inspiration for the decidedly anti-Anglo ethos of the Murrieta corrido, as recorded by Los Madrugadores in 1934). Critical of both American expansionism and Californio acquiescence to that expansion, Carrillo's writings reflect his own tenuous position as someone with a "proudly Mexican identity" who was nonetheless exiled from his homeland (Irwin 77). As someone who found refuge within the California diaspora during his exile, Carrillo harbored "a great deal of sympathy" toward Anglo-American values (Irwin 77). Like the political posturing of his "Joaquin Murrieta," Adolfo Carrillo's own political ideology was ambivalent. While this ambivalence does not translate directly into the pro-Chicano consciousness that "Joaquin" would eventually come to embody in Rodolfo Gonzales's poem of the late-1960s, it clearly articulates the duality of assimilation and separatism that becomes the Manichean dilemma at the crux of Gonzales's epic. Most importantly, Carrillo's story begins the process of locating a Mexican nationalist and working-class consciousness in the Three-Fingered Jack character. This characterization of Jack as a marginalized *campesino* resonates subtly throughout the Gonzales poem, which, in spite of Jack's absence from the poem, clearly vindicates a working-class ethos at the root of contemporary Chicano identity. Additionally, by framing Jack as the voice of nationalist resistance, Carrillo likewise anticipates Pablo Neruda's formulation of his Tresdedos character as a touchstone of "the people's" sentiments.

Although Carrillo's rendition of "Joaquin Murrieta" may seem anomalous in the Murrieta archive and the tradition of the Latino liberation hero that Murrieta would become in the 1960s, Carrillo's story deliberately modifies the dynamics of the early-century Paz novel in order to anticipate the issues explored with less ambivalence in the mid-century works of Gonzales and Neruda. And in spite of its political ambiguities, Carrillo's story concludes with an image of the severed head in a museum, an image that confirms Joaquin's continual relevance: "[The head] can still be found there, in a golden glass urn, the inanimate relic of a tormentuous and sinister time, mute symbol of a rebelliousness bloodily sublime" (Huerta 8). It must be noted that Carrillo's rendering of this sanguine sublimity and its continuity of influence excludes any reference to Jack's violence against Chinese. Indeed, in Carrillo's formulation, Jack's violence is targeted solely toward Americans. Although they deal with the problems of Three-Fingered Jack in diametrically different ways, both Gonzales and Neruda invest their liberation heroes with the same selectively cropped images of the "rebelliousness bloodily sublime" that Carrillo rendered during the transformative period between the wars.

### **"I Have Been the Bloody Revolution": Why the Chicano Joaquin Subsumes Three-Fingered Jack**

Whereas Ireneo Paz's novel subtly obsesses over the problem that Three-Fingered Jack poses to the validity of Murrieta's rebellion, and whereas Adolfo Carrillo simplifies the issue by omitting reference to Jack's Chinese victims, the Murrieta corrido and Gonzales's *I Am Joaquin* take what seems to be the easiest approach to the problem—they ignore it. The corrido and *I Am Joaquin* eliminate any reference whatsoever to Three-Fingered Jack.

Instead of involving Jack in the story of Murrieta's retaliation against American injustice, the corrido and the Gonzales poem *absorb* aspects of Jack's character into Joaquin's persona. Since both texts are narrated from the first-person perspective of Joaquin himself, they both present a situation wherein the speaker/singer takes on Three-Fingered Jack's fearlessness, strength, and pleasure in the suffering of Americans. The singer/speaker absorbs these attributes into Joaquin's persona while simultaneously removing the unpleasant references to Jack's senseless assaults upon the Chinese. For example, the corridista-as-Joaquin absorbs Jack's characteristics in the boastful ninth stanza:

Las pistolas y las dagas	Pistols and daggers
son juguetes para mí.	are mere toys for me.
Balazos y puñaladas,	Bullet and stab wounds,
carcajadas para mí.	heartly laughter for me.
Ahora con medios cortados	Now with their means cut off
ya se asustan por aquí.	here they scatter in fear. (49-54)

This image of the knife as a “mere toy” does not resonate with Ridge's novel, where Joaquin never draws his knife in order to “play” upon undeserving victims. Ridge does, however, frequently depict Three-Fingered Jack finding recreational pleasure in mindless bloodletting.

By attributing this brand of anti-American violence to the heroicized Murrieta, rather than the sadistic Three-Fingered Jack, the corridista's momentary adoption of Murrieta's persona is not loaded with the baggage of senseless racist violence that Jack embodies in the novels. For the corridista, “becoming Joaquin” does not entail reckoning with Jack's discomfiting actions. Rather, the corridista becomes Joaquin while referencing only two specific individuals other than Joaquin himself—his brother and his spouse. The brother and spouse, both of whom are Ridge inventions, are images of tremendous suffering that provide moral sanction to Joaquin's violent rebellion. Indeed, the spouse's death is essential to the pangenerational process of becoming Joaquin. In contrast, Three-Fingered Jack reminds audiences how becoming Joaquin will inevitably yield the side effect of senseless murder. Accordingly, the corrido conveniently removes that reminder.

When viewing the Murrieta corrido and Rodolfo Gonzales's *I Am Joaquin* in relation to the larger family of Murrieta narratives, the process of becoming Joaquin seems easiest when the historical Three-Fingered Jack is removed from Joaquin's memory. The Gonzales poem abounds with specific references to historical figures, yet it follows the corrido's lead in its omission of any direct reference to Three-Fingered Jack. The reasons for Jack's absence may seem relatively self-evident, particularly in terms of the poem's amalgamated subjectivity. Gonzales identifies violent sacrifice and profusion of blood as the basis of mestizaje. In order to heroicize this violence, Gonzales endows it with a liberatory teleology, as if the entire history of Chicano mestizaje was a rationale for the emergence of the Chicano Movement and its goal of reaching that “one golden moment of freedom” (*Message* 18). Gonzales's poem absorbs violence perpetrated by both Spaniards and Indigenous Mexicans. This mutual bloodletting becomes a metaphor of the mestizaje process itself. At the same time, Gonzales demonizes violence perpetrated by Americans, reflecting the poem's goal of resisting assimilation in the “whirl of a gringo society” (*Message* 16). By equating American racism with Anglo-American rejection of Mexican blood as an equal element within its fabled melting pot, *I Am Joaquin* vindicates a Latinocentrically “inclusive” kind of bloodshed



while demonizing the Anglocentric “exclusive” variety. Jack’s racialized assaults upon Chinese miners exemplify exclusionary violence and subvert Gonzales’s claim for the moral superiority of Joaquin, in particular, and Chicanos, in general.

Because Three-Fingered Jack merely kills for pleasure, there is simply no room for him in Gonzales’s poem. Although he is never mentioned directly in *I Am Joaquin*, Three-Fingered Jack and his relentless murder of Chinese-Americans is always a subtext in the Gonzales poem, as well as the Murrieta narrative in general. Gonzales absorbs Jack’s anti-gringo violence into Joaquin’s inclusive amalgamation of Chicano identity, but in excising Jack’s name and his reprehensible actions from Joaquin’s mestizaje, Gonzales demonstrates the kind of willing amnesia and necessary illusions that are prerequisites to any validation of racialized violence. By removing explicit reference to Three-Fingered Jack in an otherwise relatively inclusive tapestry of Mexican and Mexican-American identity, *I Am Joaquin* clearly indicates the problem that Tresdedos poses for Latino writers and artists who, unlike Paz and Carrillo, want to explicitly endorse anti-American violence without question. In order to fully sanction Murrieta’s rebellion, Joaquin must exude some kind of moral superiority. While Ridge’s novel is terribly concerned about vindicating Murrieta’s individual actions, it is built upon a paradox wherein no form of retaliatory violence is entirely justifiable. As Mark Rifkin asserts, “in critiquing U.S. imperial violence,” Ridge “also expresses deep anxiety and even hostility toward popular insurgency” (29). When the *California Police Gazette* manipulates Ridge’s narrative in order to make Murrieta’s criminality evident to a suspicious public, the anonymous authors excise the moments where Ridge justifies Joaquin’s motives for revenge. In a perfect contrast to the *Police Gazette*, the Gonzales poem intends to justify a potentially violent mass movement against the Anglocentric forces of the imperialist American melting pot. In order to validate the movement and its methods, Gonzales subsumes and willingly forgets about the character whom Ridge deliberately renders as an embodiment of unjustified, and unjustifiable, violence. In other words, it is difficult to rally La Raza around the mass slaughter of innocent Chinese people. Indeed, it is difficult to vindicate a minority uprising by recalling acts of extermination against another minority. Selective amnesia is much easier and more efficient.

Whereas Three-Fingered Jack is sanitized into a source of comic relief in many twentieth-century Anglo Californian versions of the narrative, he lacks the capacity to become a humorous character in these *Mexicano* versions. His violence is simply not funny. Three-Fingered Jack lacks the capacity to offer anything constructive to Chicano history, consciousness, literature, and scholarship. It is with perfect irony that Ridge invents Joaquin’s narrative body in relation to the pre-existing narrative body of Three-Fingered Jack, only to produce the mold within which the Chicano Joaquin would later absorb, digest, and ultimately discard the well-documented narrative of Jack’s terrifying violence. Three-Fingered Jack, who initially helped ground Ridge’s “life and adventures” of the absent body of Joaquin by providing a concrete point of reference, is eventually made absent himself by many Chicano artists. Several Chicano scholars in recent decades have followed a similar pattern of omission and excision. For example, Rodolfo Acuña’s *Occupied America*, though it identifies Joaquin Murrieta as “a legend in his time” and the “best-known” figure of Mexican resistance, contains only minor reference to Joaquin’s infamous henchman (140, 142). In fact, the first three editions of *Occupied America* made no reference to Three-Fingered Jack. It

was not until the fourth edition of 2000 that Acuña included a brief and ambiguous reference to the “notorious” Three-Fingered Jack, avoiding any specific reference to Jack’s sadistic crimes (142). Although Acuña insists that Murrieta’s inability “to get justice from the system” prompted him to seek “his own justice,” *Occupied America* avoids any reflection on how Jack’s own acts of injustice undermine the ethos of Murrieta’s rebellion (142). Likewise, Maria Herrera-Sobek’s *Northward Bound*, a captivating analysis of Mexican-American folk narrative, opens with an extensive analysis of Murrieta but only references Three-Fingered Jack once (30). Herrera-Sobek’s lone reference to Jack comes in parentheses while discussing the exhibition of Murrieta’s head, as if the historicity of Jack’s severed hand is an uncomfortable piece of cultural baggage. On the page opposite of this brief parenthetical acknowledgement, Herrera-Sobek’s book includes an image of the well-known poster announcing the exhibition of Joaquin’s head and Jack’s hand at the Stockton House on August 12, 1853 (31). The parenthetical nature of Herrera-Sobek’s reference to Three-Fingered Jack suggests that Jack’s inextricability from Joaquin’s “public record” (meaning the advertisement of his severed head) is the only reason for addressing Jack’s existence. Jack’s historically documented presence in Californian and Mexican-American history seems to be something of a nuisance for scholars and artists influenced by the Chicano Movement.

Rodolfo Gonzales’s writings and public addresses during the late 1960s and early 1970s delineate the centrality of group consciousness and cultural knowledge in the Chicano Movement. On October 4, 1970, Gonzales delivered a speech at Arizona State University. He emphasized the need for Chicanos to “control our own economy,” and he insisted that the first step toward economic self-determination is the creation of “cultural awareness” (*Message* 38). Gonzales describes the contours of the “gringo land” entered by many Chicano university graduates by contrasting “us” with “them,” asserting that an adolescent Chicano who is “alone” will essentially kill himself for lack of group identity and support (43). He compares the college graduate who enters the racialized mainstream economy of Anglo America with intentions of making “progress” for La Raza to someone who enters “a house full of disease with a bottle of Mercurochrome and expect[s] to cure anybody” (41). Gonzales claims that no one will be cured in this scenario; instead, the naïve and hopeful nurse “will get sick” (41). Gonzales insists that self-control and self-rule must develop directly from communal self-knowledge: “we are all the same family,” he confirms, and “when we stand up as one, there is nothing that can destroy us” (52). Gonzales explains that the gringo owns and exerts economic power over the barrio, and he claims that Chicanos will never be able to address the symptoms of their larger cultural neurosis without first cultivating self-knowledge that understands how to operate economically in order to “share” with the entire Chicano family (52). Curiously, Gonzales references Asian-American “cultural awareness” and sense of extended “family” as the necessary precursor of minority “economic power”:

When you have that cultural awareness, then you can create your own economic base. Then you can get yourselves together. You don’t hear any Japanese running around hollering “Yellow Power.” They have green power. They don’t get a haircut anywhere else except a Japanese barber shop. They don’t go to any church except their own. (52-53)

Gonzales then laments, “We are strangers in our own church. We do not control who comes into our church” (53).

Gonzales’s overgeneralized appreciation for Japanese cultural and economic autonomy is coincident with the “retreat into La Raza” that provides the cultural knowledge which serves as a prerequisite for liberation in the poem, *I Am Joaquin* (Bruce-Novoa 50). Although Gonzales’s speech addresses Japanese-American autonomy, in particular, the degree of ethnic separatism that he admires in contemporary Japanese-American culture was surely applicable to Chinese-American culture as well. And yet, John Rollin Ridge’s words concerning Three-Fingered Jack’s endless assaults upon the Chinese continue to echo throughout the archive, proclaiming that “no one cared for so alien a class” (Ridge, *Joaquin* 97). It is ironically logical that Three-Fingered Jack would be absorbed anonymously into a poem that “defines the Chicano by citing every ancestor” (Arteaga 148). By refusing to make direct reference to Three-Fingered Jack when positioning Joaquin Murrieta as a figurehead for the Chicano Movement, the Movement’s liberatory ethos is unimpeded by the traditional dynamic between Murrieta’s absent body and the historical body of Three-Fingered Jack. In order for “Joaquin” to remember who he is, he must apparently forget his most essential lieutenant. This selective amnesia is, of course, understandable. Whereas the Movement leaders encouraged people to shout, “I am Joaquin,” they no doubt would have cringed if one of their students or workers announced to the world, “I am Tresdedos!”

### **Joaquin as Transnational Liberation Hero: The Chilean Joaquin of Pablo Neruda’s *Fulgor y Muerte de Joaquin Murrieta*<sup>96</sup>**

Pablo Neruda’s iconic play, *Fulgor y Muerte de Joaquin Murrieta*, participates in the same late-1960s liberatory ethos as Gonzales’s *I Am Joaquin*. Arguably the two most influential incarnations of the Murrieta mythos post-World War II, *Fulgor y Muerte* and *I Am Joaquin* share several characteristics—their contemporaneity, their endorsement of anti-American violence, and their occupation of an anti-imperialist subject-position.<sup>97</sup> Both texts are emblematic realizations of the Latinocentric tradition of Murrieta narratives, wherein Joaquin’s story is always relevant to the events of the present. In spite of their frequent congruence, however, Neruda and Gonzales differ remarkably in two key aspects: their construction of Joaquin’s subjectivity, and their sense of how that subjectivity relates to the text’s notion of “home.” Each text focuses on the unity of “the masses of my people” in support of anti-American violence, and the primary dilemma in this regard for both Neruda and Gonzales is one of location: *Where is Joaquin? And where are “the masses” in relation to Joaquin?*

Because *I Am Joaquin* is set in Aztlán (which includes much of California), Gonzales’s Joaquin is “at home.”<sup>98</sup> Gonzales affirms this connection between Joaquin’s narrative and the earth beneath his feet, asserting in all capitals: “THE GROUND WAS MINE” (*Message* 17). In contrast, because Neruda’s narrative begins in and ultimately returns to Chile, *Fulgor y Muerte* operates through notably different spatial dynamics. For example, in the fourth scene of Neruda’s play, a Chilean miner tells a racist Anglo-American, “Where we come from, the soil belongs to the people who work it. And just now it’s our sweat that’s working

this land” (Neruda 107). Whereas Gonzales takes it for granted that the Chicano Joaquin is “at home,” Neruda must dramatize the process through which the Chilean Joaquin and his Chilean followers develop anti-American allegiances with other Latinos while living “far from home” in California. Gonzales’s Joaquin is an ahistorical persona who—despite the fact that he is an amalgamated consciousness whose historical identity is literally centered upon the fictionalized abuse of Joaquin Murrieta’s spouse—is clearly alive in the present moment. In contrast, Neruda’s Joaquin dies physically in the 1850s with the severing of his head, and his continual relevance (his “life”) relies upon the imaginative projections of people who are presently alive. Ultimately, whereas Gonzales omits reference to Three-Fingered Jack in order to sustain Joaquin’s vitality, Neruda depends upon Three-Fingered Jack as the conduit of connection who catalyzes a resistance movement that transcends time and space.

Before delving into a close reading of Neruda’s *Tresdedos* and his dramatic function as a temporal and spatial junction point, it is necessary to briefly consider the historical context of the Chilean Joaquin in order to understand Neruda’s “home” context. As the pre-eminent poet of Chile, it was inevitable that Pablo Neruda would fashion his Joaquin Murrieta as a Chilean figure. Neruda was by no means the first writer to propose the notion that Joaquin Murrieta was Chilean. Murrieta’s identity as a Chilean has appeared in print ever since the 1862 publication of Roberto Hyenne’s plagiarism of the *California Police Gazette*. Hyenne, a Frenchman, was exposed to the Murrieta narrative through a Francophone plagiarism of the *Police Gazette*. For some undocumented reason, Hyenne altered the narrative and “moved Joaquin’s birthplace from Mexico to Quillota,” changing only the details of the *Police Gazette* that identified Joaquin’s birthplace in Sonora, Mexico (Monaghan 216). Hyenne’s book was published in Santiago with the subtitle *El Bandido Chileno*, and it was later re-plagiarized in Spain and published “under a Barcelona imprint, as *El Caballero Chileno*, by a ‘Professor’ Acigar” (Jackson xxxv). It was through these transatlantic circles of plagiarized Murrieta novels that the Chilean Joaquin was born.

There is, of course, absolutely no evidence to support the notion that Joaquin Murrieta was Chilean. Rather, as with everything else in the Murrieta archive, it is an entirely textual phenomenon, a notion produced by text that begets text without any concrete evidence. The Chilean Joaquin is much like the “Head of Murrieta” itself—its own dubious documentation is proliferated as proof of its existence. The pan-generational insistence by Chilean writers that Joaquin Murrieta was one of their own countrymen has been received with suspicion and even animosity by many North Americans, as evidenced by the tenth stanza of the Murrieta corrido:

No soy chileno ni extraño	I’m neither Chilean nor a foreigner
en este suelo que piso.	to this land I tread.
De México es California,	California belongs to Mexico
porque Dios así lo quiso	because God wished it so.
Y en mi sarape cosida	And in my stitched serape
traigo mi fe de bautismo.	I carry my baptismal certificate. (55-60)

Since Joaquin’s suffering has become synecdochic of all Mexican suffering at the hands of the gringos, stripping Joaquin of his Mexican identity (even if he is still Latino) is, for many

Mexicans and particularly for many Sonorans, parallel to stripping Mexico of its claim to California in general.

Regardless of the lack of evidence and the longstanding skepticism of Latinos in North America, the notion of the Chilean Joaquin struck a chord with Chilean audiences that has echoed since the 1860s. As Irwin suggests, following the violently racist enforcement of the “Foreign Miners Laws” in 1850s California, “Chilean culture apparently was ... in need of a redeeming hero in the face of Yankee effrontery” (69). At the same time that “Murrieta fever” struck Depression-era California via Walter Noble Burns’s *Robin Hood of El Dorado*, Murrieta experienced a similar revival in Chile through the work of Acevedo Hernandez, the most prominent Chilean playwright of his era. Hernandez’s 1936 drama, *Joaquin Murieta: Drama en Seis Actos (Drama in Six Acts)*, renders the hero as “a kind of anti-imperialist outlaw comparable to Pancho Villa” (Leal, Introduction lxx). Hernandez invokes the spirit of the leader of the South American independence movement, Simon Bolivar, urging Latin Americans to “unite, move towards the ideals of Bolivar, and form a single a great power that will counteract the actions of all who dominate unreasonably” (qtd in Irwin 70). Reflective of the inherent transnationality of a Chilean emigrant who leads a rebellion in California, the Chilean Murrieta has long been an icon of international resistance to Anglocentric imperialism.

While Gonzales’s Chicano Joaquin directly addresses an audience dismembered by the U.S. yet living within its multicultural borders, Neruda’s Chilean Joaquin simultaneously addresses a specifically Chilean audience and a broader global audience. In the “Author’s Foreword” to *Fulgor y Muerte*, Neruda proudly asserts, “Joaquin Murieta was a Chilean. I have proof.”<sup>99</sup> Yet the only “proof” of Joaquin’s Chilean identity consists of previous works of fiction and drama (Hyenne’s 1862 novel and Hernandez’s 1936 play). Neruda’s claims helped to bring debates among Mexican and Chilean scholars to a boiling point, ultimately prompting Mexican historian James Officer to research the archives of both countries in hopes of settling the matter. Although he was unable to produce any new evidence that Murrieta ever existed, Officer proved definitively that all Chilean variations of the story trace back to Hyenne’s 1862 plagiarism of the *Police Gazette* (Irwin 70-71). Yet the notion of a Chilean Joaquin endures in spite of evidence that contradicts his existence. Indeed, the Chilean versions help to cement Joaquin’s reputation as a bona fide global resistance icon, and they confirm his ability to signify the desire for retribution that is often characteristic of a victimized public. Given the generations of debate regarding Joaquin’s origins, the success of Neruda’s play in Mexico is evidence of its broad appeal to Latin American audiences in spite of the debates over Murrieta’s “true” nationality.<sup>100</sup> The relative lack of attention given to *Fulgor y Muerte* by American scholars and dramatists may stem from the American perception that it is merely a “Marxist anti-American” tract or a “classic piece of sixties anti-American kitsch” (Thornton 139, 140). Despite the suspicions of American critics, the international roots and reach of Neruda’s play demonstrate the traditional transnationality of the Chilean Joaquin. Luis Leal claims that Neruda, as the most internationally famous writer to lend his hand in the pangenerational construction of the Murrieta mythos, was instrumental in bringing “the Californian hero prestige beyond the American border (Introduction lxxv).

The different notions of “home” rendered by *Fulgor y Muerte* and Gonzales’s *I Am Joaquin* demonstrate the complexity of the central questions of this chapter: Where is Joaquin? Where are “the masses” in relation to Joaquin? And how does location relate to the presence or absence of Three-Fingered Jack? Despite their different notions of home, Gonzales’s *I Am Joaquin* and Neruda’s *Fulgor y Muerte* both suggest that all Latino characters play an active role in the amalgamated consciousness that creates Joaquin. Neruda’s Latino characters also function as proxies for the theatrical audience. Because the “live” audience is physically present during the characters’ imaginative projection of Joaquin’s physicality upon an empty stage space where only an absent body exists, the theater-goers become witnesses to the collaborative act of imagination that enables Murrieta’s incarnation in the present. And of all Neruda’s characters, Three-Fingered Jack’s role is perhaps the most important. As I will now demonstrate, Neruda’s play needs Jack to help the Chilean masses imagine Joaquin and “call him back home.” Ultimately, an analysis of Neruda’s approach to Three-Fingered Jack reveals yet another example of how Jack’s characterization is altered in order to represent and validate racialized violence.

### **“Where he goes, I go”: Three-Fingered Jack as Link to the Absent Body of Joaquin**

In the script of *Fulgor y Muerte*, Joaquin and his spouse, Teresa, are represented through disembodied voices.<sup>101</sup> While “The Voice of Joaquin Murieta” and “The Voice of Teresa Murieta” recite amorous verses throughout the script, their presence is dehistoricized as well as disembodied. In contrast, Three-Fingered Jack, like the “masses of [Joaquin’s] people,” is historicized and represented by an actor on stage. The physical presence of Neruda’s Tresdedos character, coupled with the liberatory and connective trajectory of his dialogue, performs an indispensable function in Neruda’s drama. As it was in the original Ridge narrative, the “actions” of Neruda’s Three-Fingered Jack are the historicized narrative flesh that provides the popular imagination a link to the idea of the absent body of Murrieta. Unlike Ridge, yet curiously similar to the twentieth-century Anglophone pattern exemplified by *The Robin Hood of El Dorado*, Neruda’s play renders Tresdedos as an inherently comic character. Yet in contrast to the Burns novel and the MGM film, both of which portray Jack as a comical “cut-throat,” Neruda completely divests Jack of his remorseless and unconditional violence. As I will demonstrate, Neruda’s reliance on Tresdedos as the character who connects Joaquin to “his people” across time and space necessitates the excision of Jack’s sadism. Whereas Ridge uses Three-Fingered Jack to connect the idea of the absent body to a dubious yet interested public in 1850s California, Neruda uses him to not only connect the masses to the absent body but to rouse anti-imperialist sentiment in the late 1960s. As is almost always the case in Murrieta narratives, Neruda alters Three-Fingered Jack in order to engage questions of culturally sanctioned violence, sanitizing Joaquin’s traditionally violent lieutenant into someone who the masses can trust.

Neruda uses “documentation” to portray the comical elements of Three-Fingered Jack’s character in the first of the play’s six scenes. At the center of Scene One is a rather ironic dialogue between Tresdedos (Three-Fingers) and an *Oficinista* (Office Clerk). Tresdedos is attempting to depart from Chile, but the clerk demands to see his “permit”

(19). His comedic presence becomes immediately apparent when the *Oficinista* refuses to allow to Jack leave the office without the proper papers:

*Office Clerk:* Sorry, nobody leaves here without a permit.

*Three-Fingers:* Let's see. No one comes in—

*Office Clerk:* You heard me.

*Three-Fingers:* —And no one goes out.

*Office Clerk:* You heard me.

*Three-Fingers:* Well, then, what do you recommend?

*Office Clerk:* I recommend that you don't come in or go out.

*Three-Fingers:* And just how do I manage to do that? (19)

The dialogue then moves into a parody of the typical kinds of questions that one is subjected to when attempting to legally cross national boundaries. The Clerk prods Three-Fingers for any kind of paper document that could verify his identity, such as a wedding or a birth certificate. Neruda acknowledges his concern about textual identification in the “Author’s Foreword” to the play, asserting that he has “written for Joaquin Murrieta not only an insurrectionary cantata but a birth certificate.” Neruda wryly declares that Murrieta’s “identification papers were lost in the earthquakes of Valparaiso or vanished from the land-office records in the gold fields” (Foreword).

In Scene One, Three-Fingers introduces the centrality of documentation as a means of not only confirming identity, but also for traversing boundaries. To be sure, Murrieta’s identity has been an entirely textual phenomenon since 1852, and it is through textual productions that his legend traveled the world.<sup>102</sup> Through *Tresdedos*, Neruda parodies the notion that textuality generates existence and enables the crossing of borders. Neruda signifies how Three-Fingers functions as a catalyst for bringing Chileans together through the idea of Joaquin Murrieta.

*Office Clerk:* ...what about a birth certificate?

*Three-Fingers:* Never was berthed that I know of.

*Office Clerk:* Well, I'll put you down as a Caesarian section. That means complications, you know!

*Three-F:* You mean I'll have to bring you a certificate of complications?

*Office Clerk:* Don't get funny with me. Now where did you say you were going, sir?

*Three-F:* I'm shipping out with Murrieta. We're prospecting for gold. The brig's in the bay.

*(A long pause)*

*Office Clerk:* Well, why didn't you say so in the first place? Why waste all my time?

*Three-F:* It—just never occurred to me . . . Tell you what! Let's hitch up and light out together!

*Office Clerk:* It's a deal, matey! (24-27)

As seen in the above dialogue, Neruda’s *Tresdedos* presents a stark contrast to the Paz and Carrillo portrayals of the character discussed earlier in this chapter. Unlike the graphically violent *Tresdedos* rendered by Paz and Carrillo, Neruda’s character is warm and welcoming. Neruda’s *Tresdedos* must be inviting in order to catalyze the collective coming-together of the Chilean people. In the case of the opening dialogue, the Office Clerk was looking for an excuse to leave his tedious job as a customs clerk in Valparaiso. He was ready to depart

from his homeland, ready to voyage off into the gold-mined topography of American California, but he needed someone to give him a reason to leave. Three-Fingers gives him that reason. As the dialogue ends, Three-Fingers and the Office Clerk toss piles of paper documents into the air. Three-Fingers exclaims, “Just watch them certificates fly!” (29). The Clerk, clearly enjoying the act of liberation from his tedious job, tells Jack: “And I was about to pronounce you a certified idiot!” (29). While the Clerk’s line is clearly intended to evoke laughter from the theatrical audience, it reflects both the arbitrariness of textual certification processes and the rather unpleasant textual history of Three-Fingered Jack’s character. It also suggests the degree of Neruda’s alterations to the character’s disposition, for it is difficult to imagine that the Three-Fingered Jack of the Ridge, Paz, or Carrillo narrative would laugh at being called an “idiot” without promptly reacting with severe violence.

The opening scene of *Fulgor y Muerte* enacts a liberation from textuality, suggesting that Three-Fingers is about to be liberated from the gruesome textual existence in which he had previously been trapped. To be sure, prior to the twentieth century, the Tresdedos character was always relegated to the role of senselessly violent henchman for Murrieta. In the post-Ridge Murrieta archive, Three-Fingered Jack always occupies a narratological location that is quite similar to the Clerk’s office—a room from which he is not supposed to leave. Neruda’s play, in contrast to its precedents in the archive, consciously liberates Jack from this prescribed condition of barbarity, savagery, and unjustifiable violence. Neruda’s text, while clearly informed by its own textual precedents in the archive, is not going to be trapped by them. For, as Jack says to the Clerk, the play overall is preparing to “make a clean break” from its inherited precedents and traditional narrative protocols (27).

In spite of Neruda’s break from the archive, Three-Fingered Jack continues to fulfill his traditional role as the conduit of connection between “the people” and the disembodied enigma of Murrieta. Three-Fingered Jack is present in every scene of Neruda’s play. In Scene One, the physical presence of Three-Fingers triggers the Office Clerk’s imagination of a life of adventure alongside Murrieta. Jack is the nexus of connection between the actions ascribed to the disembodied leader and the common people who will be spurred into action through the imagination of the idea of Murrieta’s presence. After Three-Fingers and the Office Clerk “let the certificates fly,” the collective public sounds Murrieta’s name:

*One:* Murieta!

*All:* Joaquin! Joaquin Murieta! (29)

Although the “One” above refers to an anonymous Chilean on the margins of the stage, it also signals the dynamics of call-and-response between “one” and “all” that reflect Jack’s role in *Fulgor y Muerte*. Tresdedos is the *one* who links Murrieta to *all*.

Following the lead of the Office Clerk, many significant characters in Neruda’s drama find their connection to Joaquin through Three-Fingered Jack. One example is the Reyes character. In the original Ridge narrative, Reyes Feliz is the teenage brother of Joaquin’s spouse, Rosita Feliz, and this family relationship is present in nearly all Murrieta narratives from Ridge to the present. However, Neruda severs this connection. Unrelated to Joaquin’s spouse, Neruda’s Reyes is an inexperienced and somewhat timid young Chilean man who has accompanied the multitudes to California in search of riches. In Scene Two, which dramatizes the ocean passage from Chile to California, Neruda stages a dialogue between Three-Fingers and Reyes. The young Reyes asks Three-Fingers how long he has known



Murrieta. Three-Fingers replies: “Since he was no bigger than a bug, I reckon. But make no mistake. He gives the orders. Straight up and down like a flagpole. Nobody talks back to Murieta” (47). After establishing that although a younger man, Joaquin is unquestionably the leader of the group, Three-Fingers asserts: “You might say I was kind of an uncle or bodyguard to him, like. Where he goes, I go” (47). Every time we see Reyes from this moment onward, he is in the company of Three-Fingers. Because Three-Fingers acts as “a kind of uncle or bodyguard” for Reyes in later scenes, Neruda implies that Three-Fingers has enabled Reyes to “follow” Joaquin’s actions. One could infer that Reyes has become Joaquin, at least metaphorically, by connecting to Three-Fingers in the manner attributed to Joaquin himself.

Jack’s relationship to Joaquin as “a kind of uncle” reflects his role in the drama overall. Neruda’s Tresdedos is a jovial character, everyone’s favorite uncle, a large man full of warmth but capable of providing protection. In a play about a character who is perpetually absent, the dynamics between Three-Fingers and Joaquin come to represent the dynamics between Three-Fingers and the play in general. Jack’s claim, “Where he goes, I go,” is loaded with significance because he “goes” to every location that Neruda dramatizes. In order for us, as the audience, to imagine that Joaquin is somehow present in all of the play’s settings, we are ultimately dependent on two things for confirmation of Joaquin’s presence: the lines of poetry delivered by the hero’s disembodied voice and the constant presence of Three-Fingered Jack. As long as Three-Fingers is in the picture, then we can assume that Joaquin himself is also present, even if we cannot necessarily see him on stage.

Similar to Gonzales’s use of flowing blood as a metaphor for the process of amalgamation that produces the collective consciousness which is symbolized by Joaquin, Neruda dramatizes the creation of a “people’s” subjectivity around the idea of Joaquin’s revenge. But unlike *I Am Joaquin*, which refrains from mentioning Tresdedos at all, *Fulgor y Muerte* relies on Tresdedos to vocalize the process of forging an amalgamatory collective subjectivity in response to violence and trauma. In Neruda’s third scene, Three-Fingers uses the collective pronoun “we” in a dialogue with Reyes, signifying the tenuous position of Latinos in Gold Rush California: “We left Chile for a breath of fresh air, now we’re all walking on eggs” (67). In the fifth scene, after Teresa has been murdered and Joaquin has begun to seek revenge, Jack again uses the collective pronoun in a dialogue with Reyes, this time as a means of rousing his compatriots to actions: “We sign up with Murieta, to the last man, my good buddy. We follow him to the death!” (129). Tresdedos describes the carnage, the blood that “flows all around us,” prodding his companions back to battle: “I believe in revenge because there’s nothing else left, compadre” (129). This ability to connect characters is particularly salient in Scene Five when “An Indian” named Rosendo Juarez wanders onto the stage and speaks with Reyes and Tresdedos. In stock noble savage phraseology, the Indian describes the sufferings of his people at the hands of the Americans.<sup>103</sup> After Rosendo Juarez has spoken, Neruda demonstrates how Jack functions as a nexus of connection:

*Three-F:* Rosendo Juarez, we travel a long road and a lonely one. Come travel with us, my friend. (To Reyes) And you, Reyes, are you with us, too? Are your eyes open now?

*Reyes:* Seen enough. Heard enough. I’m with you to the death, Three-Fingers!

*Three-Fingers*: There's no other way for us. Indian, Chilean, Mexican—friends to the end, for better or worse. Saddle up. Let's find Murieta . . . Joaquin! Joaquin Murieta! (133)

In this moment, Jack literally becomes the physical nexus through which the dispossessed come together to “open their eyes” and retaliate against their gringo oppressors. The phrases “Joaquin! Joaquin Murieta!” are here repeated verbatim from the opening scene, reaffirming Jack's role as the conduit of connectivity: the “one” who brings “all” together. However, a significant change occurs in Scene Five, for Reyes and the Indian now explicitly follow Three-Fingers (“I'm with you to the death, Three-Fingers”) rather than Murieta. Although we know that Joaquin is the leader, the one whom Three-Fingers ultimately follows, Three-Fingers himself comes to personify the act of following Joaquin. In the process, everyone begins to follow him. While none of the characters ever “see” Joaquin alive, they see plenty of Three-Fingers, and they need him to give shape to the amalgamated “body” of Joaquin's rebellion.

The “body” of Joaquin ultimately plays a more eccentric role in Neruda's drama than any other Murieta narrative. *Fulgor y Muerte de Joaquin Murieta* has the remarkable distinction of being the only rendition of the Murieta narrative wherein the severed *Cabeza de Murieta* is able to speak. In the sixth and final scene—as victimized Latinos are burying their dead, after the American empire has violently confirmed its control over California—the enigmatic severed head is carried onto center stage and given a voice. It is, I imagine, one of the most spectacular moments of twentieth-century theater. In the following section, I will discuss the head's self-consciousness in relation to Neruda's larger performance of poetic subjectivity and his retrospective inversions of the process of “becoming Joaquin.” For now, I will conclude this section by reflecting on the head's connection to Three-Fingered Jack. Indeed, it is Three-Fingers who carries the head onto center stage.

Although Three-Fingers has no dialogue in the final scene, his presence is essential, and it speaks to the play's militant anti-imperialist ethos. When the severed Head of Murieta takes the stage and addresses both its mourning followers and the play's audience, it is no longer necessary for Three-Fingers to speak to his compatriots in order to connect them to Joaquin's absent enigma. Neruda's stage directions regarding the closing funeral march demonstrate Jack's significance in terms of culturally sanctioned retaliatory violence. Neruda notes: “The Cortège enters from backstage, moving steadily forward, led by Three-Fingers and Reyes, who carry the Head of Murieta” (167). Just as Tresdedos has connected the people to Joaquin throughout the main body of the play, his metaphorical role becomes literalized when he actually brings the Head of Murieta for “the people” to see. Although the historical Three-Fingered Jack was supposedly executed at the same time as Joaquin, Neruda renders Three-Fingers as a silent survivor. Over the course of Neruda's six scenes, Three-Fingers has been transformed from a talkative, warm-hearted, and comical personality into a silent, “resolute and somber” character in the play's closing moments (175). Neruda's stage directions show Tresdedos and Reyes holding their rifles as the final curtain falls, suggesting that the connections between the dispossessed Latino subaltern do not die with Murieta. Rather, as embodied by the closing image of an armed and grave Three-Fingered Jack, these transnational connections of resistance remain potent and alive in the mid-twentieth century. Neruda clearly manipulates his late-sixties Tresdedos character to

theoretically sanction anti-imperialist and anti-American violence. It is particularly ironic that Neruda's own resentment of the American military presence in Asia during the 1950s and 1960s would inspire the sentiments expressed in *Fulgor y Muerte*, for his alterations of the Three-Fingered Jack character would erase Jack's inexplicable annihilation of Asians in America in order to validate Neruda's vision of armed resistance to racist American imperialism.

### **"I Speak as a Head": Neruda's Absent Bodies and Revolutionary Subjects**

Ever since Ridge's 1854 novel, the Murrieta archive has been marked by dynamics between Joaquin's malleable subjectivity, the textual "body" that performs Joaquin's subjectivity, and the identities of the writers who conjure and perpetually reimagine Joaquin's subjectivity through language. Neruda's *Fulgor y Muerte* offers a continual meta-commentary on these dynamics. Indeed, Neruda claims his own subjective projections as the creative force behind the presence of the hero on stage and on the page. Although Three-Fingered Jack is the connective tissue between the Chilean/Latino masses and the iconic yet absent hero, it is ultimately the disembodied "Voice of the Poet" that brings Joaquin "back" to contemporary Chile and to the world at large. Although Neruda asserts his own active role in Joaquin's regeneration, declaring that Murrieta is "coming back because I wanted it" (180), the Poet's receptivity to Murrieta's ensnaring narrative, and willful pursuit of the idea of Murrieta, is what engenders Murrieta's textual and performative existence in the present. In his postscript to the play, *Why Joaquin Murrieta?*, Neruda suggests that the specter of Murrieta found him when he was not expecting it:

I wrote a big book of poems ... I called it *The Barcarole* ... a kind of ballad ... I nibbled a bit of this and a bit of that out of my stock of poetic staples—here a little water and wheat, there a little ordinary sand, the hard outline of cliff and quarries ... the sea, of course, with its calms and its thunderclaps, the eternities I watch over, here at my window, and bring to order on paper [...] Well, one day I picked and I prodded, a great cloud of dust arose like the tail end of an earthquake, flying around till it turned into an episode about a horse and its rider and started to gallop about in my verses—very long verses, this time, like highways or thoroughfares—and I rode herd behind them, verses and all, and struck gold, California gold with Chileans panning the sand and schooners under a full load of canvas sailing out of Valparaiso ... the greed and the turbulence of men, fundamental things ... this vendetta and this Chilean avenger, wild-haired and talkative ... Then my wife, Matilde Urrutia, said: But this is sheer theater! ... Theater? I said to her. And I still don't know the answer ... However, here you have it now ... Murieta is back, with a libretto and a stage ... (179, Neruda's ellipses)

Neruda claims to have given "it all I was worth day after day there by the ocean ... till suddenly—there was my highwayman, his horse's hoof striking fire in the California night" (180). Neruda attempts to speak to the specter, to coax the vision into visibility, but ultimately such visibility is only possible in text: "I said to him: Come out in the open. Come up closer ... and he took to the road of my book and galloped off with his life and his

drama” (180). Neruda concludes the afterword by bridging the gap between poetic subject and the poet’s subjectivity: “That’s it ... that’s my song and my story” (180). In singing Joaquin, Neruda essentially sings himself. In this, Neruda is like Ridge and everyone else between who has lent their hands toward the generative vocalization of the imagined body of Joaquin Murrieta. Like Ridge, the great poet tells Joaquin’s story in order to tell his own. However, unlike Ridge and everyone else to come before him in the archive, Neruda explicitly acknowledges his own role in the (re)making of Murrieta.

While Neruda “sings himself” through Joaquin, Neruda does not “become Joaquin” in the manner of the corrido and the Gonzales poem, or of the poet “Joaquin Miller” of a century earlier. Rather, *Fulgor y Muerte* expounds upon the process by which Murrieta ensnares his audience and “becomes” himself through the imaginative projection of the perceiver. For Neruda, the poet inspired by Murrieta becomes the conduit that channels the words which regenerate Murrieta’s absent narrative body in the present. In short, Joaquin becomes himself through Neruda. Neruda claims that “the specter of Joaquin Murieta still rides the California countryside,” that a receptive and imaginative person “sees” Murrieta in various locations, “posting over the prairies of Sonora, spurring a vengeful horse; or he may disappear completely into the solitudes of the Mexican Sierra Madre” (Foreword). Neruda then claims, in spite of the fact that Joaquin’s definitive experiences occurred in California, that “his chimerical path always doubles back to Chile” (Foreword). Shrugging off the need to validate his claims to “have proof” of Joaquin’s Chilean nationality, Neruda details how *Fulgor y Muerte* gives primary importance to the poet’s own subjective receptivity to the ensnaring power of Murrieta’s appeal: “these pages are not concerned with confirming history or validating fantasy. On the contrary. Between the fantasy and the history of things *I have interposed my personal identity*” (Foreword, emphasis added). Neruda articulates a pattern of self-projection that is detectable in every retelling and rewriting of the Murrieta narrative from Ridge to the present—the character’s malleability invites writers to bridge the gap between fact and fiction by projecting their own identities and politicized visions upon the canvas of Murrieta’s absent body.

Neruda directly addresses both the intellectual gravity of the “Head of Murrieta” and the necessity of imaginative projection in the process of (re)creating Joaquin Murrieta: “Whoever approaches the truth or legend of this bandit will feel the charismatic force of his gaze” (Foreword). Neruda’s description of “this bandit” emphasizes the gaze, an action located in the eyes and face. When the severed “Head of Murrieta” takes center stage and speaks to its audiences, it not only gazes into the audience, but also confirms its ability to articulate itself through Pablo Neruda. The head claims, “With no one to hear me, I can whisper the truth” (169). True to form, the head grieves more for the death of its lover than for its missing body:

First they smashed through my body; then that vile separation—  
the head shorn from the shoulders, my head in the dust.  
Now the crime does not touch me; the smart of a man’s defamation  
is as nothing compared to the pang of the love that I lost. (171)

The pain of the “vile separation” of the head from the body fades with time, but the pain of Joaquin’s physical separation from his lover does not. The head possesses a certain self-awareness concerning dynamics between Joaquin and his lover. The head realizes how these

dynamics have catalyzed the idea of the possibility of Joaquin's existence ever since Ridge's novel; and it seems to know that Joaquin's righteous, yet imaginary, anger has prompted millions to wonder if they would "become like Joaquin" if something similar happened to them. Missing the rest of its "body," the head is conscious of its own body's status as an absent entity which can be conjured by the idea of vengeance for the mythical murdered spouse. The head claims, "I speak as a Head bled of its force and inflection," suggesting that the very act of inflecting these lines requires the metaphorical blood transfusion provided by poetic imagination, textual generation, and real-time annunciation.<sup>104</sup> The Head, then, is dependent upon the curiosity and receptivity of the living in order to "come back" and speak in the present:

The voice that I summon is strange; the lips are not mine.  
 What can the Dead say? the Dead with no other direction  
 than that which the wind takes as it works in the void of the rain?

To whom is it given to know? What intruder  
 or friend, tracing the naked truth in the snow,  
 shall interpret my story or sing it in truth, in the end?

My time is a hundred years hence. My lips shall be Pablo Neruda. (171)

Though the Head is concerned about "truth" from the first line of its poetic monologue, it seems resigned to the fact that its story will ultimately be shaped by the people who give it voice. It seems to travel, disembodied and dehistoricized, always searching for a host, searching for lips of the living that can once again regenerate its absent body for a new context. When the Head claims that its "lips shall be Pablo Neruda," it is unclear whether the Head has chosen Neruda as its mouthpiece, or if Neruda has chosen Murrieta as his subject, or if it is some inevitable synthesis that neither party was entirely capable of controlling. Regardless, the head recognizes its own existence as a historical/archival phenomenon. By claiming Neruda as its "lips" in this particular time and space, the head suggests that the imaginative projections of a receptive poet are the prerequisite of its ability to speak to the people in any time and space.

The play's English translator, Ben Belitt, suggests that *Fulgor y Muerte* is "the drama of the making of a poem." This description helps to explain the presence of the disembodied voices that appear throughout the play. There are three disembodied voices in the play: The Voice of Joaquin, the Voice of Teresa, and The Voice of the Poet. All three are heard but never seen. While the Voices of Joaquin and Teresa signify the mainline tragic romance first inscribed by Ridge, they present a direct contrast to Ridge's emphasis on historicity. Ridge used this imaginary romance as a means of representing and incarnating the historical events and cultural fallout of the California Gold Rush. Ridge even acknowledges his mission as author: to produce "a record of at least a portion of those events which have made the early settlement of this State a living romance through all time" (*Joaquin* 4). In contrast to Ridge, Neruda dehistoricizes the details of the central romance. The Murrietas' disembodied voices depend upon the inspiration of a writer to incarnate them, and to rehistoricize them, by writing them into existence in the present. As a meditation on "the making" (or the "becoming") of this poem, Neruda himself need not become Joaquin; rather, he reflects the

process through which the poetic imagination conjures enough of an image of Joaquin for the public to be able to imagine the hero “back” into existence.

Bringing Joaquin “back” from a Chilean perspective requires making the absent become present across chasms of time and space. The disembodied voices of Joaquin and Teresa represent an absence-made-present through the performative regeneration of the mainline Murrieta narrative of romance and revenge. For example, in Scene Two, “Passage and Wedding,” the lovers are married during the ocean voyage from the Chilean port city of Valparaiso to the young California port city of San Francisco. Anonymous “Voices” sing of Joaquin and Teresa in absentia, describing their poetic affection for each other, and the scene concludes with a long dialogue between the bodiless voices of Joaquin and Teresa. Joaquin declares:

Now I want the world’s gold to wall you within, like a garden,  
to keep you intact in your beauty and stand guard in the center.  
For you I keep my heart golden, or let my heart harden  
till all is a fortress than none but myself dares to enter. (53)

This image of an impervious golden garden represents both a buried casket and the idea of a love that endures beyond the grave. The absence of the lovers’ bodies is a motif that sounds loudly when the play represents the most essential element of the Ridge-inspired narrative: the traumatic attacks upon Joaquin and his spouse. In Scene Four, Neruda stages the rape and murder of Teresa by having the villains leave the stage through a “doorway” as they enter the Murrietas’ house (113).<sup>105</sup> Not only is Teresa’s voice disembodied, but also any representation of these transformative moments of the narrative is relegated off-stage. The audience hears gunshots before the bloodhounds leave the house and re-enter the stage, once again emphasizing the process of hearing (or hearing about) the bodies of Joaquin and his spouse, even if we cannot see them in the flesh. The scene ends with a chorus that describes Joaquin’s revenge albeit from afar: “Joaquin dances mortally on in the distance, scouring the beaches and rivers, and killing” (119). The chorus gives the audience concrete imagery to catalyze their visions of Murrieta’s absent body within the present theatrical space.<sup>106</sup>

The role that “the masses of my people” play in conjuring Joaquin’s existence through language—more specifically, through the performance of repeated choruses sung for absent bodies—becomes especially clear in the final two scenes of *Fulgor y Muerte*, which are titled, “The Splendor of Joaquin” and “Death of Murieta,” respectively. In Scene Five, as tales of Joaquin’s vengeful deeds are spread amongst the Latino masses through song, Neruda stages dispossessed and abused miners coming together to share stories about Joaquin. The people’s collective search for Joaquin is what brings them together. Joaquin is a symbol of unification, described as “one sun” and “one continent” by onlookers (131). Three-Fingered Jack leads a group of Chileans who desperately seek him: “Let’s find Murieta ... Joaquin! Joaquin Murieta!” (133). Even the “Attackers,” the same characters that killed Teresa, are searching for Joaquin, shouting the name of the object of their manhunt: “Get Murieta! Get Murieta! Get Murieta!” (141). For a scene devoted to the “splendor” of Joaquin, the hero himself is conspicuously absent; not even the disembodied “Voice of Joaquin” makes an appearance in this scene. The “splendor,” then, has very little to do with the physical body. Rather, it is has everything to do with the act of calling the idea of

Murieta's body into existence with language. The "Voice of the Poet" concludes the scene: "I call the rage of my countrymen just, and I sing of Joaquin Murieta" (145).

The final scene, the "Death of Murieta," dramatizes the ending that was always inevitable in a production so focused on absent bodies and a "talkative" Head. As it was for Ridge, Neruda's closing image of the severed head was predetermined. The scene begins with a somber tone, the characters mourning for their fallen leader. But as more and more characters come forth to sing thanks for Joaquin, to sing praises of his actions, the tone begins to change. The mood grows celebratory and reverent. Even more characters enter the stage singing of Joaquin, and they inspire others to do the same. Anonymous individuals named "One" and "Another" (there are multiple "Anothers") stand in solidarity with Joaquin: "Joaquin was my friend;" "I go wherever Joaquin calls me... now his voice calls from the bars of a mountebank's box" (165). Joaquin calls to the masses, even as his severed head is exhibited for profit around the state. The play ends with a funeral procession and the entrance of the Head. After the Head links its lips to Neruda's pen, the Voice of the Poet concludes the play. The final lines offer an image of endless communication between the emboldened masses and their imaginary hero: "Your fate mingled bloodshed and gall, Joaquin Murieta; but its sound / is still heard. Your people repeat both your song and your grief, like a tolling bell struck underground. The people are million" (175).

Comparing the closing images of the inspired masses in *Fulgor y Muerte* to the composite subjectivity in *I Am Joaquin* reveals a litany of similarities and convergences between the distant yet contemporaneous works of Pablo Neruda and Rodolfo Gonzales. Both writers indicate that the masses constitute Joaquin. Both writers locate the words of the masses as the force which calls the idea of Joaquin, and his textual body, into existence. Gonzales's Joaquin is an ahistorical composite consciousness attempting to coalesce through mass action into a politicized collective. Whereas Gonzales gives us a Joaquin who *is* "the masses of my people," Neruda renders Joaquin as a persona who is called/sung into existence through the collective yet distinctive perceptions of "the people." Neruda's anonymous millions are the agents of Joaquin's sustenance through aggregate individual acts of imagination and song. The aggregate actions of the masses in *Fulgor y Muerte* do not, however, manufacture the amalgamated subjectivity of Gonzales's absorptive subject. No one necessarily "becomes Joaquin." Rather, the play's the thing: the performance of the play creates and reflects the conditions for the "becoming" of Joaquin. Neruda's hero unites the masses not by inviting them to share in his encompassing subjectivity, but rather by inviting them to sing their own versions of his song and thus sing him once more into a new poetic form. Neruda's "drama about the making of a poem" incarnates the continual act of recreating a poem that never entirely completes the act of singing itself. As the Voice of the Poet tells us in Scene One: "One must tell the song over / and over, remember a freeman proscribed, / my countryman walking and dying, walking into infinite myth" (33). Neruda's Joaquin is a disembodied legendary consciousness that never ceases in its mission to ensnare the living.

### Conclusions: Joaquin as Both Endpoint and Beginning

It is clear that twentieth-century Latinocentric Murrieta narratives have transformed the enigmatic fictional character into a liberation hero and an embodiment of the struggles that characterize La Raza in relation to the U.S.-dominated Western Hemisphere. What is also clear is the great diversity of perspectives on the hero that comprise the Hispanophone family of Murrieta narratives. And in spite of this great diversity, it is also clear that the Murrieta mold fashioned by John Rollin Ridge in 1854 remains at the core of each successive incarnation. However, what is not always clear, for it has to my knowledge been completely unaddressed in Murrieta scholarship, is the fact that Murrieta always marks the beginning or ending of the writer's career. Gonzales was drawn to Murrieta at the beginning of his literary career, and indeed his Joaquin came to personify the beginning of the Chicano Movement. In contrast, Paz, Carrillo, and Neruda all wrote their Murrieta narratives near the end of their careers, and their productions offer retrospective reflections on their lives as writers operating at heated junction points of cultural and political boundaries.

There is an undeniable youthful energy that courses through every incarnation of Joaquin Murrieta. If we believe the Nativist and New Americanist critics who locate John Rollin Ridge's teenage revenge fantasies as the original impetus behind the narrative, then we must acknowledge that this adolescent energy has *always* been a component of the mainline Murrieta narrative. Some versions embrace this energy and champion it (*I Am Joaquin*) while others seem to revere this energy by portraying how it operates upon a receptive audience (*Fulgor y Muerte*). As I discussed in the second chapter of this study, Jose Limón's scholarship on Gonzales's *I Am Joaquin* is critical of the angst-driven and somewhat juvenile politics of the poem itself and the early days of the Movement in general. In contrast, Neruda's *Fulgor y Muerte*, which was published five years before the Nobel Laureate's death, is reminiscent of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in that its seemingly over-the-top exuberance (what Neruda's wife perceives to be "sheer theater") is more the poet's retrospective *ars poetica* than a political manifesto. The story of Joaquin Murrieta is the story of a youth who dies in order to symbolize the youth that never dies. Murrieta's energy provides a natural starting point for young political artists and a natural endpoint for radicals yearning to wax nostalgic on the capacious exuberance of youthful rebellion.

Just as Joaquin Murrieta tends to inaugurate or conclude literary careers, his story also tends to open or close scholarly works. To be sure, these patterns are not the exclusive domain of Latino writers, for most Anglophone writers tend to follow this end-or-origin point trajectory as well. Two excellent recent studies exemplify this pattern: Robert McKee Irwin's *Bandits, Captives, Heroines, and Saints* opens with a chapter on Murrieta that sets the tone for his entire monograph, whereas Shelley Streeby's *American Sensations* concludes with a chapter on Murrieta that serves as a retrospective on the monograph as a whole, while also linking her research more directly to present-day concerns.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, Joseph Henry Jackson, arguably the most influential Anglophone scholar of Murrieta narratives to ever approach the subject, became obsessed with Murrieta at the end of his life. Jackson's final work of scholarship was the Introduction to the University of Oklahoma Press 1955 republication of the original Ridge novel. Regardless of the context, scholars of Murrieta



tend to situate themselves on the edges, at both the beginnings and the ends of things. Murrieta is a point of both entry and departure. He may appear to be a terminus, but his ability to function as both origin and destination suggests that he is not the “end of the line” so much as a pivot point, a marker of great change, and a symbol of transition.

I opened this chapter by contrasting how Anglophone and Hispanophone Murrieta narratives align the past and the present. As I have shown in this chapter, as well as the previous one, Anglocentric narratives tend to relegate Murrieta to the past as a relic of a bygone era whereas Latinocentric narratives tend to confirm Murrieta’s continual relevance to modern societies. Despite the often-contentious differences between these twin branches of the Murrieta family tree, Murrieta’s identity as a cultural and temporal pivot point characterizes every incarnation of his story, regardless of the language or context. Murrieta is the end and the beginning. Even those who insist upon the factuality and finality of Murrieta’s death in 1853 acknowledge that it symbolized the emergence of something “new.” Whether this emergent paradigm is the “gringo society” of American California or a mass resistance to that society’s modes of operation, or some synthesis of both, will ultimately reveal the writer’s own ideology, agenda, and/or aesthetics. What I have illustrated in the third and fourth chapters of this study is that the Three-Fingered Jack character is a particularly useful tool for understanding the political teleology in every Murrieta narrative, because the writer’s portrayal of Jack’s historicized body has always been the key to imagining the moral value of Joaquin Murrieta’s fictitious life.

What I still have yet to explore, however, is the degree to which the narrative of this malleable character, this fictional body with its tempestuous youthful rebellion, has the potential to transform from a liberation hero into a means of repression. That is the question at issue in the next and final chapter of this dissertation. What happens when identifying, and perhaps becoming, Joaquin is a means not for liberation but rather for one’s demise? What happens when one needs freedom from the freedom fighter? To answer these questions, I will focus on the work of Isabel Allende, a Latina writer who has, like John Rollin Ridge, immigrated to California and found a new life in the multiculturalism of the Golden State. Allende’s 1999 novel, *Hija de la Fortuna (Daughter of Fortune)* provides a perspective that had been absent from the Murrieta archive for one hundred and fifty years: the Murrieta narrative from a woman’s perspective. As I have demonstrated thus far, Joaquin Murrieta’s very existence has always depended upon the idea of his victimized, and often murdered, spouse. And unlike Three-Fingered Jack, who can apparently be excised when necessary, the traumatic experiences of Murrieta’s spouse are central to the narrative and cannot be removed. Prior to Allende, no one had ever produced a narrative that attempted to reimagine the Murrieta narrative from the perspective of a female character. Composed on the eve of the millennium, Allende’s novel exemplifies the emergent possibilities that were taking shape at this temporal junction point, offering new vistas on the old story and severely complicating the liberation ethos that marks the male-centric Murrieta archive. As with everything related to the Murrieta narrative, applying a holistic and archival perspective to Allende’s novel only deepens one’s appreciation of the relative significance of the new kind of “beginning” that Allende inaugurates.

## Chapter Five

### “I Am Free”: Isabel Allende’s Liberation from the Liberation Hero

Vengo a vengar a mi esposa,  
yo lo vuelvo a repetir,  
Carmelita tan hermosa,  
cómo la hicieron sufrir.

I come to avenge my wife,  
and I say again,  
how they made my lovely Carmelita  
suffer so much.

(“Corrido de Joaquin Murrieta,” lines 27-30)

[Tao Chi’en] had never seen a woman capable of such extremes in real life, only in classic novels in which the heroines always died at the end. (Allende, *Daughter of Fortune* 147)

To conclude this multigenerational study of Joaquin Murrieta narratives, I now turn my attention to Isabel Allende’s 1999 novel, *Hija de la Fortuna* (*Daughter of Fortune*). Given her Chilean roots and her affinity for Pablo Neruda, it is not surprising that Allende’s rendition of the Murrieta narrative would be grounded in a Chilean perspective.<sup>108</sup> The protagonist of Allende’s novel is a young Chilean woman, Eliza Sommers, who falls in love with Joaquin when she is sixteen years old. After Joaquin leaves Chile for California in 1850, Eliza decides to follow him to California. Pregnant with Joaquin’s child, Eliza is completely blinded by her belief that Joaquin will want to marry her and raise a family together. Allende stages Eliza’s journey through Gold Rush California as a search for Joaquin, a scenario in which Eliza is essentially attempting to insert herself into the typical Murrieta narrative as Joaquin’s lover. In other words, Eliza does not want to *become Joaquin*, but she does want to *become his spouse*. However, Eliza is never able to locate Joaquin’s inevitably absent body during her years in California. Instead of locating Joaquin, Eliza unintentionally comes to develop her own identity. In the process of developing Eliza’s subjectivity, Allende’s novel offers radical reconfigurations of the Murrieta archive.

Allende’s book is one of only a small handful of Murrieta narratives written by women authors, and it is the first such narrative to substantially reconsider the role of women in the typical Murrieta story.<sup>109</sup> Near the end of Chapter Two, I suggested that revisiting the typical Murrieta narrative, even under revolutionary pretenses, is bound to yield a ready-made sexism. Because the victimization of women is central to the story of Joaquin Murrieta, the process of retelling the liberation hero’s narrative ironically becomes a means of restriction and oppression for women characters. Allende’s *Daughter of Fortune* rebels against this ready-made narrative mold. Whereas all previous Murrieta narratives have engaged issues of the protagonist’s subjectivity, Allende’s is the first story about Murrieta that creates space for the development of a genuine and sustainable subjectivity for its women characters.

It is an undeniable fact that the typical Murrieta narrative operates around the objectification and victimization of the woman who is closest to Joaquin. Her name—whether it is Rosita, Rosa, Carmen, Carmela, Carmelita, Teresa, or something else entirely—has proven to be irrelevant, something that merely reflects the personal tastes of the men who have written the stories. Her only crucial and distinguishing characteristic is that she suffers. The woman is usually Joaquin’s spouse (although in the case of Carrillo’s short story, it is Joaquin’s sister). She is usually gang raped and murdered by a group of Americans. Her victimization is the pivotal moment and foundational justification for Murrieta’s revenge in every version of the story. Indeed, it is literally the “center” of Rodolfo Gonzales’s poem. Her suffering, however, is typically used as a mere prop in the narrative’s development of Joaquin’s subjectivity. In the typical Murrieta narrative, the subjectivity of the woman is of no concern, and her only narratological function is to suffer in order to catalyze Joaquin’s revenge. As I suggest in Chapter Two, Murrieta narratives implicitly ask audiences if they would become Joaquin should their families suffer abuses similar to those experienced by Joaquin’s family. What these stories never seem to ask is why the narratological function and subject-position of Joaquin’s lover are always marked by a seemingly inflexible prescription for suffering.

Occasionally, the central woman character does not die, as is the case in the original John Rollin Ridge novel and a few variations to follow. Yet even in these instances, the woman is always gang raped, and her trauma invariably catalyzes Joaquin’s revenge. Some scholars have suggested that Ridge’s novel, because it depicts “Rosita” as someone who survives the assault and lives to travel the California countryside dressed as a man, ultimately supports a kind of clandestine female agency.<sup>110</sup> However, this interpretation ignores the fact that the pathos of Ridge’s novel is fully dependent on the archetype of the suffering woman. Consider the concluding image of Ridge’s *Joaquin Murrieta*:

Of Rosita, the beautiful and well-beloved of Joaquin, nothing further is known than that she remains in the Province of Sonora, silently and sadly working out the slow task of a life forever blighted to her, under the roof of her aged parents. Alas, how happy might she not have been, had man never learned to wrong his fellow-man!  
(159)

The male-centric modes for developing pathos in Ridge’s novel are an ironic undercurrent of Ridge’s final line, for it emphasizes that the wrongs done from one “man” to another rather than to this particular woman. While it is possible to read proto-feminist strands in the Ridge novel, especially if one is searching for traces of traditional Cherokee matrilineality and women’s political agency, such a reading willfully ignores the fact of Ridge’s blatantly patriarchal paradigms, wherein Rosita’s rape is grammatically structured as an injury to Joaquin rather than to Rosita herself: “It was the first injury *he* had ever received at the hands of the Americans” (10, emphasis added). Just as the actions and experiences of all Mexican bandits are always subordinated to (and occasionally subsumed by) Murrieta, the violence done to his spouse is always rendered as a transformative moment in the construction of Joaquin’s—and only Joaquin’s—imagined subjectivity.

The act of narrating the life of Joaquin Murrieta, then, is a ready-made prescription for producing images of women’s suffering. For a more rounded and genuine women’s subjectivity to be possible in this context, the male-focused narrative must be recognized and

reconfigured. This act of liberation from the ironically oppressive liberation narrative is precisely what is at stake throughout Allende's *Daughter of Fortune*. The final line of Allende's novel—"I am free!"—is a riff on the canonical line, "I am Joaquin!" Rather than conclude with a line that identifies Joaquin, therefore subordinating itself to the typical ready-made narrative of male-centric liberation inspired by female suffering, Allende's novel moves in a trajectory of greater liberation. It is liberation from the need to belong to or be liberated by Joaquin. Allende's protagonist, Eliza Sommers, is the first female character to enter the typical Murrieta narrative and not simply survive unharmed, but also develop a complex self-awareness in the process.

Although recent scholarship on *Daughter of Fortune* addresses issues of women's agency, self-determination, and freedom from male-centric prescriptions, scholars have yet to address how Allende's novel explores these dynamics through direct engagement with the larger Murrieta archive. For example, Cherie Meacham reads the novel as an "an epic quest for adventure and full personhood" that inverts and reconfigures conventions of romance novels in order to yield a "liberation from destructive romantic obsession" (31; 36). Meacham argues that *Daughter of Fortune* juxtaposes "the idealizing mythology that engages the imagination of women in romantic obsession with the profound suffering it can introduce to their lives," ultimately revealing and ridiculing "the inherent absurdity of the ideology" (36-7). Although Meacham's arguments are insightful and valid, her failure to reference Allende's engagements with the larger Murrieta archive limits the potential complexity and application of her readings. My goal in this chapter is to build upon the work of feminist scholars, like Meacham, who read *Daughter of Fortune* as a quest for a more genuine women's subjectivity by interpreting Allende's narrative reconfigurations in relation to the typical patterns of Murrieta stories.

Reading the modes of liberation in *Daughter of Fortune* reveals the transnational and transgenerational complexity of Allende's inversions and subversions of the typical male-centric Murrieta narrative, a fitting conclusion to this study of the narrative's multigenerational transformations. The complexity of Allende's narrative liberation may not be evident without a thorough understanding of the archive itself, a shortcoming evident in Cheli Reutter's recent essay, "Manifold Destinies." Although Reutter's essay is admirably bold in its deviation from most interpretations, her conclusions do not hold when Allende's novel is considered in relation to its precedents in the Murrieta archive. Reutter compares *Daughter of Fortune* with Toni Morrison's *Paradise* in terms of each novel's subversions of dominant misogynist and colonialist paradigms typical of literature set in the American West. Reutter critiques Allende in order to praise Morrison:

If Allende leaves her readers with an ultimately disappointing happy ending, Morrison leaves hers with a challenge... Allende does cleverly co-opt the traditional western, including the ideology of Manifest Destiny, for Pan-American and Latina purposes. However, as Morrison's *Paradise* relentlessly indicates, colonizing is colonizing, regardless of who is doing it. (210)

Reutter believes that Allende's novel does not challenge typical narrative conventions so much as it merely "replace[s] hegemonic and masculine fantasies of the American West with romantic feminine ones," producing a novel that is "not new" and not inherently revolutionary but merely a revisitation of overfamiliar tropes that "keeps the West safe for

Anglo cowboys” (200). Reutter’s analysis is unsupportable because it relies upon a severe oversimplification of who Joaquin Murrieta is and what his narrative entails. Reutter gleans a few surface details from Robert McKee Irwin’s analysis of Murrieta, emphasizing minor points such as the fact that Mexicans tend to use the “rr” spelling while Chileans often use only one “r,” in order to yield sweeping conclusions about Joaquin’s role in Allende’s novel. Without referencing the narrative details of the Murrieta archive, the context within which Eliza Sommers generates her own narrative consciousness, it is not possible to appreciate the full complexity of Eliza’s “newness” and the larger subversiveness of her story. Reutter’s reading ignores the fact that the post-Ridge Murrieta narrative has always operated on the foundational principle that colonization is a problem. While most writers have revised Ridge’s original novel in order to attempt to validate one side or the other, Ridge’s novel itself “relentlessly indicates” that colonization is a problem on all levels. As the only Murrieta narrative since Ridge to avoid choosing sides in the perpetual U.S.-Mexican conflict and as the first Murrieta narrative with a well-rounded female protagonist, Allende’s *Daughter of Fortune* deserves acknowledgement as a revolutionary novel within the contexts of both the Murrieta archive, in particular, and hemispheric American literature, in general.

As Pablo Neruda suggests in his Foreword to *Fulgor y Muerte*, the process of reconstructing the Murrieta narrative is ultimately less a means of determining Joaquin’s “true story” than it is a means for Joaquin’s writers to project their own stories. In the story of Eliza Sommers, the central conflict involves Eliza’s movement toward a space and perspective wherein Allende, like Neruda, can project her own story and “personal identity.” Furthermore, Allende is less concerned with rebirthing the typical plot or claiming to know the particularities of its “true” details than with relinquishing the very need to depend upon the typical Murrieta plot for her protagonist’s existence, purpose, and self-awareness. To put it simply, Eliza Sommers must ultimately “lose the plot”—she must lose the typical Murrieta plot that necessitates women’s suffering—in order for Allende to tell her own story in *Daughter of Fortune*. Cloistered in the proto-transnational bubble of an English colony in mid-nineteenth century Valparaiso, Eliza’s awareness of life at the novel’s inception is severely limited. Her life is rigidly defined for her; and often these definitions are based on manipulations and illusions. Over the course of the novel, Eliza must learn to do two primary things: to liberate her own story from the various narrative containers which encompass and restrict it and to formulate her own subjectivity by writing her own story on her own terms. As I will demonstrate in the pages that follow, Allende works to liberate her protagonist with tools and tropes common to the Murrieta archive but rather uncommon for its women characters: invisibility, bilingual literacy, textuality, and literary imaginings.

### **Born in Chile, Destined for California: Eliza Sommers Enters the Typical Murrieta Plot**

From the beginning, the story of Eliza Sommers is one that continuously engages, parallels, and inverts the typical Murrieta plot. Eliza was born in Chile in early 1832, roughly the same time that Joaquin would have been born if he was, as Ridge claims, twenty-two years old at the time of his death in 1853. Similar to Joaquin, Eliza’s origins are obscured.

Indeed, she has no birth certificate. Taking the uncertainty of Joaquin's origins a step further, certain members of Eliza's family have obscured her true origins from nearly everyone, including herself. Eliza's "birth was a forbidden subject" around her house (Allende, *Daughter* 4). Her guardians, the Englishwoman Rose Sommers and Rose's brother Jeremy, function as her foster parents. Jeremy is the chief executive of the Chilean branch of the British Import and Export Company, Ltd.; and the Sommers' life in Chile is the product of a convergence of national cultures mobilized by nineteenth-century economic imperialism. Jeremy does not realize the truth of Eliza's origins until the final third of the novel, well after Eliza has escaped from Chile. Rose knows, however, that Eliza is the child of her other brother, the sailor Captain John Sommers, and an unknown indigenous Chilean woman. Eliza's anonymous birth mother swaddled baby Eliza in a sweater belonging to John Sommers and left her on Rose's doorstep in a crate of Marseilles soap. When Eliza is "old enough to understand," Rose addresses the question of Eliza's background while pretending not to know the true story: "You must have English blood like us... Only someone from the British colony would have thought to leave you in a basket on the doorstep of the British Import and Export Company, Limited" (4). Miss Rose, however, prefers not to be a full-time maternal presence in Eliza's life. She leaves much of the grunt work involved in raising a child to "Mama Fresia," the Sommers' Indian servant. Rebutting Rose's claims that Eliza is English, Mama Fresia tells her, "You, English? Don't get any ideas, child. You have Indian hair, like mine" (4). Like Joaquin's, Eliza's true origins are often based on conjecture. Others speculate about her physical attributes, and even those who know the "true story" are unclear.

The vague story of Eliza's origins, like Joaquin's, has been heavily embellished over the years. Eliza's arrival on the Sommers' doorstep in a Marseilles soap crate is the subject of such fictitious embroidery. While Mama Fresia "never wavered in her description of the soap crate," insisting that it was a relatively plain and simple crate with a naked baby girl inside, Miss Rose greatly enhances and sensationalizes the story of Eliza's arrival: "Miss Rose's version was, with the years, *embroidered into a fairy tale*," wherein the crate was "woven of the finest wicker and lined in batiste; Eliza's nightgown was worked with French knots and the sheets edged with Brussels lace, and topping everything was a mink coverlet, an extravagance never seen in Chile" (4, emphasis added). That Miss Rose's memories are embellished by fictions of physical extravagance reflects the importance of "fabric" and fabrication in both Joaquin's and Eliza's stories.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, Miss Rose's emphasis on fabricated external appearances points to a conflict between surface and substance, in particular the power of language as a tool for manipulating perceptions and living out fantasies. When Rose was a romantic sixteen year-old living in London, she had a sexual affair with an older man. He was a singer, a Viennese tenor named Karl Bretzner, who was in London to perform a series of concerts. The passionate affair ended abruptly when Rose's brother, Jeremy, realized what was happening and put an end to it. After the affair, Rose would spend "hours closed in her room, writing" (97). Through writing, Rose discovers "an extraordinary formula for never emerging from her idyllic romance with Karl Bretzner, reliving each and every moment of their incendiary passion, along with fantasies she invented in the silence of her spinster nights" (99). Indeed, unbeknownst to Jeremy or Eliza, Miss Rose spends her time in Chile composing erotic books that sell extraordinarily

well around the world. Ultimately, Miss Rose's linguistic fabrications and embroidery point to the generative power of language and its frequent role in the liminal space between fact and fiction, between lived reality and imaginative projection: precisely the liminal space from which all Joaquin Murrieta narratives emerge.<sup>112</sup>

Eliza demonstrates her own expressive capacity through literary production and music, two modes of expression that chart Eliza's liberation from restrictions to an enhanced capacity for self-determination. Multilingual fluency and a gift for expressive language are additional points of connection between Eliza and Joaquin, for their literacy enables them to move within and affect the cultural terrain of multiple borderlands. Eliza is taught the Queen's English by Miss Rose, while she learns Spanish through her dialogues with Mama Fresia. Eliza's bilingual literacy will eventually become one of her primary means of economic survival while traveling the California Mother Lode in disguise. Eliza's search for freedom—indeed, her quest to write her own story—is ultimately a search that operates through language. Eliza's formative years, however, demonstrate little capacity for free movement. Eliza's early relationship with language and expression is presented not in terms of personal agency but rather in terms of gender training and physical restriction. In addition to bilingual literacy, Eliza's ability to play the piano is her other primary means of survival in the Mother Lode. As with writing in English, Eliza learns the piano from Miss Rose. Eliza does not learn music or literature in order to express herself, but because Miss Rose is shaping Eliza into the young woman Rose believes Eliza should become. Rose forces Eliza to walk upright by strapping a metal rod to the child's back, a clear symbol of physical and cultural restriction. Rose even has Eliza practice the piano while the rod is fixed upon her back. "Eliza learned to play," the narrator reports, "without either talent or grace, but through dint of strict discipline could by the time she was twelve accompany Miss Rose at her musical evenings" (11-12).

Eliza's early relationship to writing and music reveals how she is traveling a path that involves mimicking a set of motions that are prescribed by her foster mother/aunt. These motions, like the corsets that Rose requires Eliza to wear, are extremely restrictive. Miss Rose herself wears "a corset stiffened with whalebone and so tight that she could not take a deep breath or lift her arms higher than her shoulders" (25). Paradoxically, this external restriction contrasts greatly with the degree of imaginative freedom that Miss Rose exercises when composing her fanciful erotic novels. Likewise, while Rose's efforts to shape Eliza's posture and public behavior manifest themselves through restrictive clothing and materials, such as the metal rod, Rose leaves Eliza alone much of the time, endowing the girl with a striking degree of internal, mental freedom. As an adult looking back, Eliza "concluded that the erratic Englishwoman had been a very good mother and that she was grateful to her for the large spaces of internal freedom she had given her" (12).

The corsets in the novel, and the limited range of motions that they inscribe upon the wearer, are metaphors for the typical Murrieta plot and its control over Eliza's range of motion throughout the novel. Even in the early pages, before Eliza meets Joaquin, her personal qualities are shaped in relation to his. She is a reflection of Joaquin, an inversion, a kind of female doppelgänger. Her own identity is shaped, and her own range of motion restricted, by the traditions of the Murrieta archive and its typical plot. Eliza literally "follows the plot" for years, yet she must ultimately "lose the plot" in order to find herself.

Eliza's personal engagements with and perceptions of corsets parallel her engagements with and perceptions of Joaquin. From her rather restrictive childhood to her increasingly liberatory young adulthood, Eliza learns to jettison the corset, just as she must learn to jettison her search for Joaquin.

Allende's Joaquin is, naturally, enigmatic and dubious. The uncertainty begins with his name. Allende makes his last name "Andieta," a substantive alteration, but one that cannot necessarily be disproven.<sup>113</sup> Allende's mutation of Joaquin's last name reflects and inverts a clearly gendered pattern in the Murrieta archive—while Joaquin Murrieta's name always remains the same (debates over the single or double "r" notwithstanding), his lover's name frequently changes. This instability reflects the relative lack of importance given to Joaquin's spouse in the typical Murrieta plot. In most Murrieta narratives, Joaquin's spouse's name and personal story are insignificant in comparison to the effects of her tragic fate. Additionally, Allende's use of "Andieta" offers subtle commentary on the ambiguous "five Joaquins" identified in the document that chartered Harry Love's Rangers. While there was clearly some uncertainty regarding Joaquin's last name in 1850s California, Allende pushes that confusion even further by giving her Joaquin a last name that was not even included among the "five Joaquins."<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, the word "Andieta" derives from the name of the South American mountain range that serves as Chile's national boundary: the Andes. By naming her Joaquin after the Chilean mountains, Allende invests her anti-hero with a sense of Chilean indigeneity, a subtle yet obvious commentary regarding the ongoing debate about where the absent body of Joaquin is "from."

Allende's Joaquin embodies many issues that any reader familiar with the Murrieta master plot will easily recognize: colonial subjugation, poverty, pride, an indefatigable sense of justice, and Romantic literature and its various tropes.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, this Joaquin has the "aura" of "the tragic, damned poet" (100). Before the discovery of gold entices thousands of Chileans to leave home for California, Joaquin Andieta works as an accountant of Jeremy Sommers at the British Import and Export Company, Ltd. Allende renders him as a proud yet destitute young man, living in the most impoverished and downtrodden neighborhood of Valparaiso, the only child of a single mother. Allende introduces readers to her Joaquin in 1845, three years before Eliza meets him in 1848, thus preparing us for the young couple's brief initial encounter. Allende's Joaquin likes to spend time in a bookshop when he is not working, partially because (unlike the pub) it does not cost him any money, but more importantly because it is a place where the angry young man can debate liberation philosophies with his compadres. He is "the youngest" of "the group of intellectuals" who gather in a bookshop in El Amendral, the racy French district of Valparaiso. In 1845, Allende's Joaquin "was barely eighteen but ... made up for lack of experience with the qualities of a natural leader" (58). His personality is described as "electrifying ... even more notable given his youth and poverty" (58). Allende also endows him with the capacity to transform words into actions, theories into movements: "This Joaquin was not a man of many words, but of action, one of the few with enough clearmindedness and courage to transform ideas from books into revolutionary impulses; the others would rather argue forever around a bottle in the back room of the bookstore" (58). In spite of his distinctions when compared to previous incarnations of the bandit hero, Joaquin Andieta is clearly cut from the same cloth that John Rollin Ridge introduced to the world in 1854. Curiously,



Joaquin Andieta, though himself a manifestation of hackneyed tropes of literary fancy, has great suspicions regarding fantasy. In contrast to Jacob Todd, an Englishman with a penchant for utopian theory and social idealism, Joaquin “posed a rock-hard realism” (60). He claims, with all the irony that such a fantastic character can muster: “We have much to do, we can’t waste time discussing fantasies” (60).

Despite Joaquin’s apparent rejection of fantasy, his relationship with Eliza is composed almost entirely of literary fantasies. Indeed, their relationship is essentially a literary phenomenon that delineates stark contrasts between literary idealism and actuality. Before their first encounter, Eliza was already primed to project narrative fantasies upon the canvas of Joaquin’s body. Eliza’s “random reading,” in conjunction with the fabulist travel narratives of her foster uncle/biological father John Sommers, “gave wing to her imagination” (44). Eliza and Joaquin first encounter each other at the Sommers home in the summer of 1848. She is sixteen; he is twenty-one.<sup>116</sup> He has come to their home to account for some company materials, and when Eliza first sees him, she makes herself “invisible” and watches as he “counted, marked, and recorded in his notebook,” emphasizing the importance of writing and documentation in their conjoining narratives (79). Eliza brings him a glass of orange juice, and as a result of this brief and speechless encounter, they become instantly smitten with each other. In narrating their first encounter, Allende uses the notion of “idealized love” to limn the disjunction between the real and the ideal:

[Eliza] wanted to die right there, pierced by the sensation, sharp and no more to be denied than a sword, that was filling her mouth with warm blood and, even before she could identify it, crushing her with the terrible weight of idealized love. Many years later, standing before a human head preserved in a jar of gin, Eliza would remember that first meeting with Joaquin Andieta and again experience the same unbearable anguish. She would ask herself a thousand times along the way whether she had had a chance to flee from the devastating passion that would warp her life, whether maybe in those brief instants she could have turned away and saved herself, but every time she formulated the question she concluded that her fate had been determined since the beginning of time. (80)

This “anguish,” this sense that the plot of her life had already “been determined” by Joaquin, demonstrates that Joaquin represents a predetermined narrative that has traditionally ensnared Joaquin’s lover and sentenced her to a seemingly inevitable death. However, even while she is overcome by this passionate “idealized love,” Eliza instantly realizes “in some vague but painful way” that “she was trapped,” causing her to “suffer a physical reaction” (82). Eliza’s highly romanticized and predetermined literary entrapment by the typical *Murrieta* plot offers clear parallels to her physical entrapment by the corset and Rose’s predetermined notions of what Eliza’s story should be.

Inevitably, Eliza’s relationship with Joaquin develops through writing. When Joaquin next comes to the house for business, Eliza slips him a letter, instructing him simply and concisely how and where to meet. Before their first vocal conversation, Eliza imagines loving him, and in a clear echo of Neruda’s play, Eliza believes she hears Joaquin’s “murmurs of love carried to her on the wind” (101). They begin to meet regularly, and they find comfort in their similarities, in particular their “obscure origins” (106). Joaquin has very little to say to Eliza in person, but he has a penchant for writing love letters “of such

intensity that had Miss Rose seen them she would have been appalled” (107). Allende describes the heated letters by contrasting them to the actuality of Joaquin’s behavior:

In the most feverish language he told her what he did not dare in person, out of pride and propriety... Those pages, reread a thousand times in stolen moments, were the principal sustenance of her passion, because they revealed an aspect of Joaquin Andieta that did not emerge when they were together. They seemed written by a different person. That haughty young man, always on the defensive, somber and tormented, who embraced her madly and then pushed her away as if burned by the contact, in writing opened the floodgates of his soul and described his emotions like a poet. (107-108)

Textuality thus becomes the foundation of their intimacy. Indeed, the first time they have sex in the Sommers house, Joaquin enters and leaves the building through a “library window” (112).

Despite the appearance of his furious passion on the page, Allende makes it clear that Joaquin is much less a genuine textual invention than a hollow textual derivation. Allende characterizes Joaquin as the product of the “political romanticism” of his time, reading “the theories of Lamennais” and the Encyclopedists in “mediocre and confusing translations” (112). Joaquin’s own love letters and poetic expressions are, like the political theories he consumes, essentially derivative and ready-made. If Joaquin offers hackneyed political slogans in person, then on the page he offers hackneyed Romantic tropes. Though Eliza’s sixteen-year old mind is immediately aware of a certain entrapment personified by Joaquin, she is not yet a critical enough reader to deconstruct Joaquin’s “mediocre” and clichéd profusions of love.

Allende portrays textuality as the medium through which Eliza attempts to negotiate Joaquin’s relative absence from their physical encounters. *Daughter of Fortune* deliberately engages the notion that textuality has *always* generated the idea of Joaquin’s absent body. When Joaquin and Eliza have the chance to speak face-to-face, Joaquin is much more interested in expounding upon political theory than he is in engaging Eliza, pointing to his *absent presence* through the clear disjunction between his words and deeds: “He was prepared to give his life for the pointless glory of a burst of heroism, but he had a visceral fear of looking Eliza in the eyes and talking of his sentiments. [...] She would have given anything to have him say in person the magnificent phrases he wrote to her in his letters” (113). Eliza’s willingness to grant greater significance to Joaquin’s romantic clichés on the page than to his actions when physically present had been “[n]ourished by Miss Rose’s novels and the romantic poets, whose verses she knew by heart” (114). Eliza’s literary upbringing caused her to lose “herself in the intoxicating delight of feeling adored like a goddess, failing to see the discrepancy between those inflamed declarations and the real person of Joaquin Andieta” (114). Indeed, Joaquin “was never completely present. Even in the most rousing embraces on the pile of drapes, his mind was somewhere else, ready to leave or already absent” (115). After three months of lovemaking, “Joaquin Andieta’s letters, sprinkled with poetic figures and torrid declarations, were noticeably fewer and farther between. Eliza sensed that her lover was somewhere else, that at times she embraced a ghost” (119). Eliza nonetheless reads the love letters to confirm her belief in the authenticity of Joaquin’s feelings for her. Essentially, the stories that Eliza uses to construct her perceptions of

Joaquin are based on Romantic clichés emitted by a young man who is relatively absent even when his body is physically present. This dynamic not only confirms my argument that language and derivative textuality are the technology that construct the absent narrative body of Joaquin; it also demonstrates how this narrative body and its Romantic connotations are precisely the forces of entrapment that attempt to steer Eliza's own narrative onto an inevitably self-destructive trajectory.

Joaquin's physical absence from Eliza is catalyzed, of course, by the California Gold Rush. When gold is discovered, and the entire world eyes the instant capital available in California, Joaquin and his compadres quickly jettison their revolutionary rantings against wealth and the abuses of capital, opting instead to follow the golden trail to San Francisco. Both of the women in Joaquin's life, Eliza and his mother, are terribly depressed by his decision to leave. But Joaquin's mind is made; and he is extremely stubborn once he has made his decision. Allende prefigures the revenge motifs of the *Murrieta* master plot by suggesting that Joaquin's motivation for going to California is to seek retribution against those who mocked him and his mother: "He could see pouches bulging with gold dust, baskets of huge nuggets, greenbacks in his pockets, the palace he would build, more solid and with more marble than the Club de la Union, to shut the mouths of the relatives who had humiliated his mother" (124). Allende offers another twist to the basic *Murrieta* plot by having Joaquin steal firearms from the British Import and Export Company, Ltd. prior to departing Valparaiso. Though Joaquin acquires the weapons to defend himself in a countryside that is already rife with "bandits," his actions cause him to become a criminal from the perspective of the British company. Allende's Joaquin is criminalized in the eyes of Anglo authority figures well before the supposed murder of his spouse at the hands of racist gringos.

Weeks after Joaquin's departure, Eliza realizes that she is pregnant with his child. In a play on the ambiguity regarding "evidence" and "presence" throughout the *Murrieta* archive, this fetus becomes physical evidence of Joaquin's existence. It is also evidence of his presence in Eliza's life and his role in the prescriptive shaping of her story. Yet to Eliza, the fetus is evidence of Joaquin's love, evidence of the notion that they should be together. Joaquin, whose own absent father "vanished as quickly as he had sown his seed," vows "never do to Eliza what my father did to my mother" (106, 110). Eliza believes that Joaquin will want to be with her, forever, upon realizing that he has impregnated her. Indeed, that is the idealized ending typical of many romantic stories wherein the predestined couple lives together "happily ever after." Yet the archive of *Murrieta* narratives informs us of the fate that ultimately awaits Joaquin's lover in California: certain death. Puffed up with romantic clichés and ignorant of the larger story in which she yearns to play the role of "wife," Eliza believes that it is her destiny to follow her young lover to California so that they can be married. After explaining to Mama Fresia that she is pregnant, Mama Fresia exclaims, "What are we going to do?" (128). Eliza replies, "I am going to marry him" (128). When Mama Fresia questions how Eliza will marry Joaquin now that he has departed, Eliza pronounces, "I will have to find him" (128). Eliza is prepared to embark on a search for Joaquin, but as a young female character in Joaquin's narrative, Eliza certainly has a tough road ahead of her.<sup>117</sup>

Eliza begins her transnational search for Joaquin when she leaves Chile by stowing away in the belly of a ship bound for California. In traveling from Valparaiso to San Francisco by water, Eliza retraces the typical plot of Chilean *Murrieta* narratives.<sup>118</sup> Eliza enlists the help of Mama Fresia to get to the port, where she encounters a Chinese man, Tao Chi'en, who has served previously as the cook and medic on John Sommers's ship. Tao Chi'en is a doctor trained in traditional Chinese medicine and relatively well versed in Western practices. He was "Shanghaied" by Captain John Sommers one night in Hong Kong, awaking to find himself hungover and adrift on the ocean, informed by Captain Sommers that he was now the ship's cook. Though only in his mid-twenties at the time of his abduction, Tao was already a widower. The death of his wife had rendered him depressed and stagnated, and being abducted by Eliza's biological father to some degree liberated him from depression. Tao Chi'en, no longer in the service of Captain Sommers, meets Eliza with her family at the port of Valparaiso a few days before Eliza attempts to stow herself onto a ship bound for California. Fortunately for this daughter of fortune, Eliza and Mama Fresia encounter Tao Chi'en at the port on the day of Eliza's escape. Tao resists at first, but in addition to Eliza's payment of jewelry, Eliza's intensity captivates him. He agrees to help her, but not without assessing her in relation to "bandit" narratives and romantically tragic literary types. Allende writes:

"Can you hide me in a ship? I have to go to California," she explained.

"Why? That's no place for women, only bandits."

"I'm looking for something."

"Gold?"

"Something more valuable than gold."

The man stared, openmouthed, because he had never seen a woman capable of such extremes in real life, only in classic novels in which the heroines always died at the end. (147)

These are the terms on which Eliza embarks for California: as if she were cut from a plot where she is bound to die. Yet Eliza's entrance into the typical *Murrieta* plot is coupled with another narrative, and that is the emergence of Eliza's own narrative, the narrative wherein she begins to write the plot of her story for herself.

Eliza's capacity to envision writing her own story and ultimately liberating herself from prescriptive misogynist narrative tropes begins to develop when she first disguises her gender by wearing male clothing. When Mama Fresia brings Eliza to Tao on the night of the ship's departure, Tao gives her "a pair of baggy trousers and a worn smock" (151). A single young woman would be extremely conspicuous on a ship going to San Francisco at the height of the Gold Rush, but disguised as a deaf-mute Chinese boy, Tao's younger brother, she will not arouse suspicion. She requires Tao's help in removing her corset, signifying the integral role that Tao plays in enabling Eliza to lose the restrictively predetermined plot, to abandon the mainline master plot that ends with her death. Allende closes this chapter, titled "The Farewell," with the implication that Eliza has now begun to write her own story: "She had the clear sensation of beginning a new story in which she was both protagonist and narrator" (152). Yanira Paz suggests that while the "*bildungsroman* desde la perspectiva de Joaquin es incompleto," Eliza's own story is now able to begin: "[a]l salir de Valparaiso, comienza el *bildungsroman* de Eliza" (40, 41).<sup>119</sup>

Eliza is transformed during the voyage north. Hiding with the ship's cargo, Eliza becomes extremely ill and has a miscarriage, coming very close to death. For Eliza, "the depths of the ship's hold" are "a metaphorical hell" (Meacham 37). Eliza survives this hellish experience, and with medical care from Tao Chi'en, she gradually she begins to heal. The belly of the ship also becomes a metaphorical womb from which Eliza, losing the fetus inside of her own womb, is ultimately reborn upon arriving in California. As Nelly Martinez notes, Eliza

not only survives the ordeal but is also reborn to a radically different awareness of life. Transformed into a bona fide *picara* upon her arrival in California, where she learns the tricks of survival on the open road, she gradually comes to recognize and ultimately satisfy her newly revealed desire for freedom. Her journey in pursuit of her absent lover, Joaquin Andieta, turns into a glorious adventure of self-discovery for the young woman. (Martinez 52-3)

Martinez makes the crucial point that Eliza's journey involves both the pursuit of the absent body of Joaquin and Eliza's own transformation in terms of literary "genre." As Eliza disembarks from the ship in California, disguised as Tao's speechless brother, she walks several narrative trajectories at the same time. On one level, Eliza is now "searching for Joaquin," just as the entire state will be doing a few years later, as well as every writer from Ridge to Allende who "feels the charismatic force" of Murrieta's gaze. On a narratological level, if Eliza were to find Joaquin and settle down with him to raise a family, she would be walking right into the Murrieta master plot to meet Joaquin in the winter of 1850, precisely the time when Ridge stages the rape of Joaquin's spouse. But Joaquin's spouse—Rosita or Carmela or whatever name she is given—is no *picara*. She is merely the one who accompanies Joaquin, lacking her own agency and sentenced to suffer. In contrast, as she abandons the corset and assumes her first disguise, Eliza is reborn as the author and protagonist of her own picaresque bildungsroman, a truly remarkable position in terms of the development of a literary subjectivity. But it will take her years to abandon the search for Joaquin, and she will need to learn to write her own story before she can free herself from sexist traps of the typical Murrieta narrative.

### **Eliza in California: Losing the Plot, Writing Herself Free**

When Eliza arrives in California, her story enters and occupies the same spatial and temporal context as the typical Murrieta legend. Eliza's story, however, never entirely merges with the main Murrieta plot. Instead, Eliza's story follows and occasionally sidles up next to Murrieta's, creating points of connection but never enabling Eliza to view the full body of Joaquin in California. In keeping with the legend, Joaquin's body is perpetually absent, even if the plot of his story is particularly close. Eliza's movements within California between 1850 and 1851 parallel those of Joaquin's as charted by Ridge and the *California Police Gazette*: she lands in San Francisco; she travels up the Sacramento River to the gold-laced foothills; she ventures into the mountainous terrain of the "Mother Lode" during the advent of the anti-"foreigner" laws; and she emerges from the harsh winter of 1850-1851 transformed. During this time, Eliza is torn between what she has been programmed to

believe that she must do (find Joaquin) and what she is actually doing (developing her own voice and her own self-determined narrative). Eliza's epic quest, in addition to merely surviving the harsh conditions, is to cultivate her own literary subjectivity, rather than having it subsumed by Joaquin's. Ultimately, Eliza operates as a disruptive agent within the mainstream Murrieta plot. Paralleling the typical narrative while cultivating the tools to chart her own narrative instead, Eliza is a covert agent of destabilization within the master plot.

Eliza's "invisibility" enables her to enter the contexts of the master plot and search for its absent protagonist. On arriving in San Francisco and disembarking from the ship dressed as a Chinese boy, Eliza feels that "the man's clothing gave her an unfamiliar freedom; she had never felt so invisible" (222).<sup>120</sup> Eliza's unfamiliarity with this kind of freedom points to her unfamiliarity with her own story prior to her adventures in the mother lode region, a circumscribed consciousness that results from the gender-biased narratives which have cultivated Eliza's limited subjectivity up to this point in her life. Though Allende emphasizes how crossdressing creates a feeling of newness for Eliza, *Daughter of Fortune* has already established Eliza's capacity to cloak herself and blend into her surroundings. This trait is referenced throughout the novel, often in moments where different narratives and ideological trajectories collide with each other. For example, the first reference to Eliza's invisibility as a young child comes during Allende's description of the transplanted (catalogue-ordered) colonial illusions that characterize the Sommers' home in Chile:

Eliza had little contact with other girls her age; she lived in the closed world of her benefactors' home, in the eternal illusion of being in England rather than Valparaiso. Jeremy Sommers ordered everything from a catalogue, from soap to shoes, and wore light clothing in the winter and an overcoat in the summer because he followed the calendar of the Northern Hemisphere. The little girl listened and observed attentively; she had the rare gift of making herself invisible at will, blending into the furniture, curtains, and lowered wallpaper. (44)

Through careful observation, Eliza is able to adapt herself to surroundings that are out of place, to embody the patterns of textiles and modes of living that others have grafted onto the location in which she resides. This ability will serve her well during her California peregrinations, enabling her to survive the harsh social climate instigated by the sudden transplantations of people from multiple cultures with radically different ideas of how a society should operate. As a sixteen year-old, Eliza utilized her invisibility to bring her romantic desires for Joaquin Andieta to fruition. When she first sees Joaquin marking in his notebook that afternoon at the Sommers' home, she "made use of her ability to make herself invisible and watched him at her leisure" (79). In the days leading up to their first sexual coupling, Eliza makes "a more frequent use of her talent for making herself invisible" (108). Her talent also enables her to navigate the minefields of cultural interfusion in a colonial borderlands. Years later in California, when Eliza and Tao learn of the "Yanqui" massacres of Native Americans and consider the threat posed to all non-Anglos, Eliza writes to Tao: "You need to make yourself invisible, like me" (239).

The difference between Eliza's tricks of invisibility in Chile and in California is that she cultivates her invisibility at the Sommers' home in Valparaiso while being raised within the rather strict external parameters set by Miss Rose and Jeremy. Her invisibility there becomes a means for her to slip away from the Sommers' narrative of who and what she is

meant to do—a skill learned through mimicry that becomes a vehicle for her to surreptitiously deviate from their prescribed plot.<sup>121</sup> It also becomes a means for her to escape from her foster parents' plot and collide with the main Murrieta plot. In California, however, Eliza's story is no longer being written by Miss Rose or Jeremy Sommers. The central conflict here is the need for Eliza to write her own plot; and it is during her prolonged acts of disguise that she begins the process of utilizing her own literary skills to both earn some money and develop her own subjective voice. In both Chile and California, invisibility and disguise enable Eliza to lose the plot prescribed for her, but only in California does she have the external and internal freedom—signified by her jettisoning the corset and donning baggy male clothing instead—to write her own story in the process.

Whether dressed as a Chinese or a Chilean boy, Eliza's emergent notion of freedom is still engulfed by the stories of others that seek to restrict or direct her movements. During her first few months in California, Eliza lives with Tao Chi'en in Sacramento, continuing her masquerade as Tao's deaf-mute Chinese brother. It is during this period of time that the two characters begin to develop an unspoken mutual affection. However, Eliza must first cultivate her own powers of language before she can write herself free from the repressive Murrieta plot, and she cannot develop her linguistic skills while pretending to be deaf and mute. Tao wants to grow plants, to literally cultivate roots in the area. Eliza, in contrast, is still ensnared by Joaquin's "charismatic force" and compelled to continue her search. With the dawning sense of potential freedom and mobility that she has gained from passing as Tao's brother, Eliza decides to continue her search for Joaquin while masquerading as a Chilean boy. She calls herself "Elias Andieta," claiming to be Joaquin's brother when she makes inquiries regarding his whereabouts. "Elias" departs from Tao's house and embarks for the Mother Lode. Throughout this period in the novel, Allende frequently references previous incarnations of the Murrieta story when depicting its continuing power over Eliza. For example, Allende drops a clear reference to Neruda's repetition of "galopa Murieta" in the fifth scene of *Fulgor y Muerte*. When an American tells Eliza that Joaquin slept in his house a few weeks previously, Eliza feels her "heart galloping" from the news (265).

As Eliza proceeds with the foolish search for Joaquin, she begins to develop characteristics often attributed to Joaquin, most notably in terms of mobility and language, traits which enable both of them to move undetected throughout the Mother Lode. Allende describes Eliza's developing multilingual fluency during her travels as Elias Andieta:

She had ... improved her talent for making herself invisible. She could ride into a town without attracting attention, blending into groups of Hispanics where a boy of her looks would go unnoticed. She learned to imitate Peruvian and Mexican accents to perfection and so to pass for one of them when she was looking for company. She also changed her British English for American and adopted certain indispensable swearwords in order to be accepted among them. She learned that if she talked their lingo, they respected her. (272)

This emphasis on invisibility as something achieved through language and as a tool for "passing" certainly echoes Ridge's characterization of the Romantic bandit himself. Furthermore, as with Ridge's Joaquin, textual production and manipulation becomes paramount in Eliza's ability to exert her own agency. In some of the novel's most humorous and endearing scenes, Eliza encounters a traveling brothel led by a manly woman named

“Joe Bonecrusher.” They give her the nickname “Chile Boy,” and Eliza is welcomed into their alternative family structure after they realize that she is a decent pianist. Eliza’s new job as the pianist in the traveling brothel gives evidence to Maria Andre’s claim that for minorities and women at the time, “the transgression of either racial, geographical, social and sexual boundaries became a ... legitimate practice to exercise mobility and agency” (76). During her stint with Joe Bonecrusher’s gang, Eliza recognizes how badly the many illiterate American miners in the region would like to send letters to their families back East. Eliza fills the void, becoming a professional letter-writer: “She charged two dollars per letter, regardless of length, but when she incorporated sentimental phrases the man would never have thought of, she usually got a good tip” (282). Eliza “offered her services in English and Spanish”; as with Joaquin, Eliza’s bilingualism is a means of exerting the self, as well as a means of survival (282). By writing letters for others, Eliza engages the burgeoning Anglo-Californian economy on her own terms, an expression of her own agency and capacity for self-reliance. But in doing this, she is committing other people’s stories to paper, rather than her own.

Eliza does, however, explore her own subjectivity and interiority through textual production by writing in her diary and by composing letters to Tao Chi’en. By writing to Tao, Eliza begins to pull free from the magnetism of the mainstream Murrieta plot. Allende places quotation marks around passages from these letters and diary entries, signifying a certain dialogue between Eliza’s emergent voice on the pages she composes and her narratological development as the literary subject of her own story. Eliza has fallen “in love with freedom,” but with no one present with whom she can discuss this newfound freedom, she expresses herself by writing to a specific yet absent audience (275). Eliza “had left Chile with the purpose of finding her lover and becoming his slave forever, believing that was the way to extinguish her thirst to submit and her hidden wish for possession, but now she doubted that she could give up those wings beginning to sprout on her shoulders” (276). She writes to Tao about “finding new strengths in herself,” explaining that she now understands why Joaquin “stole precious hours from our love to talk to me about freedom” (277). She also confesses, “I miss you, Tao. There’s no one I can talk to about what I see, what I feel” (277). Yet even as she is charting her own narrative trajectory, Joaquin’s “charismatic force” continues to affect her through his old love letters, which she takes with her everywhere she travels: “those letters [were] her only grasp on the truth, irrefutable proof that their delirious love was not an invention of her adolescent imagination but that it was real, a brief blessing and an extended torment” (108). The letters serve as continual evidence of Joaquin’s love, providing a wry comment on the dynamics between textuality and “proof” in regards the archival significance of the absent body of Joaquin Murrieta. While Joaquin’s letters are Eliza’s proof of his existence, Eliza’s letters to Tao become proof of her increasing liberation from the liberation hero. Even as textuality compels Eliza to continue her search for the absent hero, even as she still imagines that the conclusion of her own story is marriage with Joaquin, Eliza is clearly beginning to visualize a conclusion that is less restrictive and predetermined: “Of one thing she was sure: she would never wear a corset, not even on the day of her marriage to Joaquin Andieta” (295).

Living with Joe Bonecrusher’s traveling brothel, Eliza survives the winter of 1850-51, widely regarded as the time of the harshest and most brutal conditions for miners in the



Mother Lode. The traveling brothel, however, does not survive. The structure burns completely during a fire, and the members of this unconventional family begin to chart their own courses. For Eliza, the question is whether to stay in the mountains and continue her search, or to reunite with Tao Chi'en and begin the search anew. It is a difficult decision, particularly now that 1851 has arrived. As noted in the second chapter of this study, 1851 was the year that the anonymous boogeyman "Joaquin" began to appear in newspaper accounts of Mexican-on-American crimes, and exaggerated stories of the mysterious bandit leader begin to filter through the public consciousness. These stories directly conflict with the image of Joaquin contained in the letters that Eliza keeps:

By now, Eliza had no idea what trail to follow. Joaquin Andieta had evaporated in the confusion of the times and in his place had begun to materialize an outlaw with the same physical description and a similar name, a figure she found impossible to identify with the noble young man she loved. The author of the letters she kept as her only treasure could not be the same person as the one to whom such horrendous crimes were attributed. The man she loved would never have associated with a cold-blooded killer like Three-Finger Jack, she was sure, but her conviction melted away at night when Joaquin appeared to her wearing a thousand different masks and bringing a thousand contradictory messages. She would wake up trembling, besieged by the raving specters of her nightmares.... (330-1)

Eliza's "disillusion" (the title of the chapter from which the above quotation is taken) parallels the collective disillusion concerning gold. Just as the fantasy of easy money was being undermined by the reality that the major deposits of gold were already taken, Eliza's fantasy of Joaquin as her lover and Romantic hero is being undermined by the terrifying stories in the press. Eliza struggles to reconcile her own imaginative projections with those of other writers. Additionally, Allende's description of Joaquin's thousand different masks strikes a direct connection to Joseph Campbell's application of Jungian archetypal theory in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The implication here is that Joaquin could be any of those heroes, that he is ultimately a malleable textual production, a page upon which writers inscribe precisely what they want to perceive. Unsure of who or what she is truly searching for, and also unsure of how to proceed in the mother lode region with the recent upsurge in violence, Eliza chooses to travel downriver and reunite with Tao Chi'en, who has now moved to San Francisco's Chinatown and begun to establish himself as a medical professional.

By returning to San Francisco in 1851, Eliza is now able to witness the evolution of Murrieta's textual persona by reading the newspapers and absorbing the textual proliferation of exaggerated and dubious details about the mysterious emergent icon. The Murrieta narrative that develops in the newspapers is in some respects the narrative that Eliza is supposed to be in. At least, she convinces herself that this narrative is the one she must participate in prior to her departure from Chile. And as Joaquin's spouse/lover, the Murrieta master plot is indeed where Eliza is supposed to be if she wants further restrictions on her person, or if she simply wants to be abused. Yet, the true narrative that Eliza is supposed to be in is the one that she has begun to write for herself in her diary and her letters to Tao, the one that will ultimately find its resolution among the multicultural throngs of early San Francisco: this is Eliza's story, not Joaquin's. This story places her in Chinatown

with Tao in 1851, not traveling the Mother Lode at Joaquin's side dressed in male clothing, which is how Ridge describes Rosita's life in 1851.<sup>122</sup> The Eliza-in-Chinatown plot is the narrative that must fulfill itself in order for Eliza and Tao's own daughter, and granddaughter, to be born in Chinatown many years later, which is precisely what happens in the fictional chronology between the events of *Daughter of Fortune* and its sequel, *Portrait in Sepia*.

While moving toward the resolution of her own story, Eliza is able to observe Joaquin's gradual development as a literary phenomenon through the newspaper and the various texts that construct the sense of Joaquin's vast presence, even if no one has found him yet. While observing Joaquin's textual evolution, Eliza "collected everything published about Joaquin Murieta and memorized it, as she had Miss Rose's poems when a little girl" (359). However, "she tried to ignore the references to the outlaw's sweetheart" (359). Eliza's perspective on Murrieta's fictional lover points to a general desire among the public for stories comprised of Romantic caricatures, as well as the notion that "invented" derivative characters often sell quite well: "'They invented that girl to sell newspapers; you know how the public is fascinated by romance,' she argued to Tao Chi'en" (359). Eliza tries to reconcile the textual fabrications with the possibility of actuality, but to no avail:

On a brittle map she tracked Murieta's steps with the determination of a navigator, but the available information was vague and contradictory: routes crisscrossed like the web of a demented spider, leading nowhere. Although at first she had rejected the possibility that her Joaquin was the one responsible for the bloodcurdling attacks, she was soon convinced that that person jibed perfectly with the young man she remembered. He, too, had rebelled against abuses and was obsessed with helping the downtrodden.... (359-60)

Although she is unable to reconcile her imaginative projection of Joaquin—his deeds, his actions, and the narrative body she constructs for him—with the gruesome reports of violence and mutilation, Eliza eventually does what many other readers and narrators have done with the character of Joaquin. She finds a way to take a narrative that leads "nowhere" and, by projecting details from her own memory, she takes the character "somewhere" and confirms his existence. Fortunately for Eliza, associating Joaquin with the violent rebellion enables her to further distance herself from the desire to participate in his master plot, ultimately propelling her toward the resolution of her own story.

The more Eliza abandons the typical Murrieta plot, the more Eliza's distinctive story emerges in contrast to the typical plot. This increasing degree of Eliza's emergence from narrative codependency couples the increasingly swift passage of time between 1851 and 1853 in *Daughter of Fortune*, building liberatory momentum as the novel approaches conclusion. During this time, Tao and Eliza grow closer, eventually acknowledging and cultivating their mutual affection. In late 1852, Tao attempts to "make a deal" with Eliza: "If within one year you do not find this Joaquin, marry me" (364). This would seem like the final destination of Eliza's narrative, if *Daughter of Fortune* were dependent upon Eliza's marriage for its resolution. But this novel is not about finding marriage; instead, it is about finding freedom. That is why the novel concludes not with a wedding but with the severed "Head of Murrieta." As history confirms, the alleged Head was exhibited in San Francisco in the late summer of 1853. Before she visits the Head, Eliza begins to dress in her old

clothing, women's clothing that she brought with her when she left Valparaiso three years earlier. Having exercised her invisibility and cycled through a series of disguises in order to trail Joaquin, Eliza has come full circle and begins to feel comfortable with "her own" appearance, indeed with her "self," for the first time in California. After she begins to dress publicly in female clothing, Eliza determines to have her picture taken so that she can send a picture of herself to Miss Rose back in Chile, providing visual and textual evidence of her own vitality and existence: "She wanted to put her daguerreotype in a fine gilt and red velvet frame for Miss Rose's desk. She had brought Joaquin Andieta's letters to immortalize them in the photograph before she destroyed them" (396). On the same page, only a few sentences later, the newspapers report that "Joaquin Murieta has been killed" (396).

By framing the destruction of the love letters as the precedent for Eliza's concluding expression of liberation, Allende underscores the importance of textuality in the production of Murieta's charismatic gaze. And while it is clearly a post-hoc argument to assert that Eliza literally killed Joaquin by destroying her letters, the chronology is nonetheless striking. Narratologically speaking, it makes perfect sense that Eliza would need to destroy her evidence of Joaquin's adolescent love before the media reports his death and beheading. In doing so, Allende locates Eliza's liberation from the typical Murieta narrative in her own decision to destroy the letters rather than in words printed by someone else, reflecting the subjective and internal nature of Eliza's break from the master plot. To borrow from Rodolfo Gonzales, the act of destroying Joaquin's letters signifies Eliza's "golden moment of freedom" in terms of writing her own story (*Message to Aztlán* 18). Since Eliza is already liberated from the repressive narrative of her largely imaginary hero, the final lines of the novel do not express the moment of narrative liberation so much as confirm it. After viewing the Head, and after Tao Chi'en asks if it is Joaquin's, Eliza confirms her liberation from the need to know. She states, bluntly and concisely, "I am free" (399). By not directly addressing the question of Joaquin's identity in her response, Eliza demonstrates the ultimate narrative function of Joaquin's story, and Eliza's efforts to locate him, in *Daughter of Fortune*. The search for Joaquin is the plot from which she has finally liberated herself.

Despite Eliza's expression of liberation, the actual degree of her freedom should be questioned. As Cheli Reutter notes, Eliza's claim to freedom is made while she holds Tao's hand and relies upon him to fulfill important needs in her life. Reutter thus asserts that Eliza is still dependent on men in the conclusion of her story. Reutter expresses this dependency in terms of narrative trajectory:

Eliza is never really free of Joaquin because, even after her feelings for him have waned, he looms large... Yet even though Eliza is no longer besotted with Joaquin... she is shaped by him in the sense that she is narratologically indebted to him: he is the legend, she the interwoven story. (Reutter 201)

Reutter makes an important point, but it is an oversimplification that neglects to account for the "charismatic force" of the Murieta archive and *Daughter of Fortune's* intertextual engagement with the dynamics of that archive. The final image of Tao and Eliza, hand in hand, could also be read as Allende's ultimate subversion of and liberation from the Murieta archive. Allende does not simply reconstruct the same old story about uncompromising racial tensions during the Gold Rush, those social conditions so fervently detailed by John Rollin Ridge and his many literary descendants. Rather than deliver yet another narrative

about Joaquin Murrieta that portrays an inability to coexist across ethnic boundaries, Allende constructs a new narrative about an unlikely multiracial and transnational couple. I argue that Eliza has indeed liberated herself from Joaquin, and her story from his. It took the entire novel to do it, thus the significance of ending the book with Eliza's expression of freedom after finally viewing the severed head: Eliza is free from the need to concern herself with identifying the spectacle of evidence of the supposed absent body of this "tragic, damned poet" (100). In contrast to Reutter's analysis, Cherie Meacham asserts that Allende closes the novel "with an affirmation of [Eliza's] liberation from romantic delusions" (42). She may hold Tao's hand, but it is on her own terms. Eliza is fully conscious of whose hand she holds, and she knows why she wants to hold it. This is a revolutionary act in that Eliza was unable to undertake this action without first liberating herself from adolescent "unthinking servitude to Joaquin" (Meacham 42). Eliza's story no longer operates because of Joaquin, nor does it serve the effort to search for and identify Joaquin. In the end, neither Eliza nor her narrative serves Joaquin.

### **"The Earmarks of a Dime Novel": California Journalism and Allende's Reconfiguration of the Archive**

Although Allende liberates Eliza from the ready-made sexism of the typical Murrieta narrative, *Daughter of Fortune* does not seek to excise itself from the larger Murrieta archive. On the contrary, Allende makes several vital contributions to the archive. This dynamic is what Cheli Reutter misinterprets as Eliza's dependence upon Joaquin. Without a broader archival perspective of liberation and literary projection within the history of Murrieta narratives, it is not surprising that Reutter reads Eliza's assertion of freedom as "narrative indebtedness" to Joaquin. In Chapter One, I suggest that John Rollin Ridge and Isabel Allende are the only two authors in the entire Murrieta archive who do not vindicate one "side" in the U.S.-Mexican conflict at the expense of the other. Ridge paradoxically validates and undermines the ethos of both sides. Ridge imbues his narrative with a slew of contradictions; and Allende is the first writer post-Ridge to fully embrace those contradictions rather than attempt to "fix" them and endorse a particular racialized nationalist agenda. From an archival perspective that considers *Daughter of Fortune* in relation to Ridge's original Murrieta novel, it becomes clear that Allende's novel reconfigures the archive while simultaneously liberating its protagonist's story from narrative "debt."

Both Ridge and Allende render their Joaquins as composite characters, amalgamations of literary patterns and precedents extant long before Joaquin's head entered the public consciousness. This phenomenon is nothing new in the global archive of liberation heroes and/or bandit narratives, for as one critic noted in 1958 regarding the Robin Hood mythos, "parts of the Robin Hood legend were made of patches taken from other outlaws by himself" (Simeone 30). The Ridge and Allende novels are marked by their metatextual recognition of these patterns and precedents. Both Ridge and Allende endow their characters with an awareness of these tropes, distinguishing them as unique protagonists in relation to their narrative precedents. For example, when Ridge's Joaquin returns to the stronghold to find that his men have kidnapped an innocent young woman,

Joaquin is furious. He returns the woman to her home, and he proceeds to individuate himself and his actions by contrasting them to previous literary incarnations of characters like him:

I have read of robbers who deliberately ravished tender and delicate females and, afterwards, cut their throats, but I despise them. I am no such robber, and I never will be. (105)

Although Allende's novel renders Joaquin as a rather unexceptional character in the archive of bandit heroes, it presents Eliza Sommers as an exceptional character who, like Ridge's Joaquin, is individuated through contrasts with extant literary tropes. Tao Chi'en's comment upon first meeting Eliza, comparing her to women "in classic novels in which the heroines always died at the end," demonstrates the novel's metatextuality and its reflexiveness of its own participation in several archival traditions (147). Indeed, Eliza's transformations and her liberation from the mainstream *Murrieta* plot enable her to survive the novel, distinguishing her from the legions of tragic heroines to precede her.

Both Ridge and Allende render protagonists who are simultaneously representative and exceptional. This notion of the characters' exceptionalism is linked to a central tenet of American ideology: the concept of "American exceptionalism." Ridge's Joaquin has often been read as the archetypal hard-working immigrant, hardwired for success in the individualist American system, yet the pervasive and brutal racism of the time prevented this particularly exceptional immigrant from achieving the "American Dream."<sup>123</sup> Likewise, Allende's Eliza can certainly be read as a prototype of the exceptional American woman who braves the male-centric world and works to rise above her station.<sup>124</sup> Exceptionality notwithstanding, these two characters also represent the masses, the multitude. Ridge's protagonist clearly embodies the collective suffering and cultural dismemberment of the Mexican public post-1848. Like Ridge, Allende gives her readers a protagonist who is a reflection of the author's contemporary context. As Nelly Martinez asserts, "Paradoxically Eliza, a distinguished representative of nineteenth-century society, embodies the contemporary multitude" of the millennial era (62). If Ridge's Joaquin embodies a subjectivity commensurate with the Mexican body politic during and after the California Gold Rush, then "Eliza embodies the subjectivity that is commensurate with" the "transnational period the western world is experiencing at present" in the early twenty-first century (Martinez 64). Furthermore, just as Ridge suggests that anyone could be Joaquin in disguise, Allende suggests that anyone could be a gender-bending transient in disguise, like Eliza. Several women in *Daughter of Fortune* appropriate and assume typically male roles, such as the manly Joe Bonecrusher, the woman who leads the traveling brothel through the Mother Lode in 1850. Allende also suggests that the multitude is filled with individuals in some sort of gendered disguise, as in the case of a mail carrier named Charley, whose small, soft hands prompt Eliza to believe that Charley, like "Elias" herself, is a woman disguised as a man (275). Ridge's Joaquin and Allende's Eliza embody the actions and the spirit of the masses. As such, these two protagonists are rather like the revolutionary heroes written by Neruda and Gonzales: they are of the multitude, and their exceptional existence depends upon the multitude's (mis)perceptions.

Allende breaks with all previous *Murrieta* narratives, however, by explicitly suggesting that the legendary "Joaquin *Murrieta*" was ultimately the imaginative literary manifestation of

a California journalist. Through her inclusion of such a character in *Daughter of Fortune*, Allende indirectly incorporates Ridge himself into her narrative. Yet Allende's journalist is much different than Ridge. His name in California is Jacob Freemont, although Allende introduces him to readers in Chile, very early in the novel, as an Englishman named Jacob Todd. After losing a drunken wager, Jacob Todd travels to Chile to sell bibles. He promptly falls desperately in love with Rose Sommers, whom he meets through other English expatriots. Though Rose never returns his affections, Jacob Todd remains obsessed with her. Todd is prone to making false statements, taking money from an Anglican church to support bible-selling missions into Patagonia where he claims to be Christianizing the *Indios* with great success. Yet this is a fantastic lie. Todd never sets foot in Patagonia. After a church audit reveals that Todd has been taking the church money for his own personal expenses, Todd is exposed as false preacher and immediately disgraced. He leaves Chile and returns to England, dishonored and unwelcome, with only a very few Chileans remaining his friends after the exposure. One of these Chileans, naturally, is Joaquin Andieta.

Jacob Todd's colorful and enthusiastic imagination reflects the depth and capacity of Ridge's own vivid imagination. Todd's tendency to fabricate becomes especially clear through his interactions with Joaquin. Todd is among the circle of intellectuals who would debate politics with Joaquin and others in the Santos Tornero bookshop in Valparaiso. Todd has "astonished" the locals with his "too liberal ideas"; and he sought refuge in the bookshop with other radicals and luminaries. Yet even then, he seems focused on things that do not necessarily exist.

...Todd preached the creation of a communal society without priests or police, governed democratically under a unique and flexible moral law.

"You live in the clouds, Mr. Todd. We have much to do, we can't waste time discussing fantasies," interrupted Joaquin Andieta.

"But if we don't begin by imagining the perfect society, how shall we create one?" Todd responded, waving his constantly growing notebook... (60)

Todd's idealism would never wane, and after his disgraced return to England, he begins to actuate his plans for a communal society. In many ways, Todd becomes the archetypal English utopian idealist, a purveyor of a vision with respectable goals yet so detached from reality that it is bound to fail. In spite of his failures at swindling Chilean Protestants and at building the ideal society in Britain, Jacob Todd's vivid imagination, and his ability to believe his own fabrications, makes him the perfect person to concoct the legend of Murrieta. Todd comes to California during the Gold Rush, changing his name to Jacob Freemont. Like John Rollin Ridge, Jacob Freemont realizes in 1850 that his fortunes in California are not to be found in the placers, but rather in the field of journalism.

Allende's journalist shares much in common with Ridge, but there are also glaring differences between the fictional Freemont and the real Ridge. Allende has Captain John Sommers unexpectedly encounter Jacob Todd, now Jacob Freemont, on the streets of San Francisco in 1851. The captain is astonished to see that the "fraudulent missionary was now the caricature of a Yankee" (290). Freemont's ability to blend into his environment demonstrates the same chameleon qualities that many scholars have identified in Ridge.<sup>125</sup> After some detective work, Miss Rose was able to deduce that when Eliza disappeared, she followed Joaquin to California, and now John Sommers has sailed to California to track

down his wayward biological daughter. When Captain Sommers informs Jacob Freemont that Eliza has trailed Joaquin to California, the journalist has difficulty accepting the idea that Joaquin would steal firearms from the British Import and Export Company, Ltd.:

“Joaquin Andieta! I know him, he was my friend in Chile.”

“He is a fugitive from justice. Accused of theft.”

“I can’t believe it. Andieta was an upstanding young man... he had such a strong sense of pride and honor...” (294)

Upon first learning that Joaquin is in California, Freemont’s first impulse is to vindicate him, regardless of any evidence that may or may not exist to incriminate him. This impulse parallels Ridge’s purpose in writing the 1854 novel: to vindicate Joaquin, and to debunk the notion that he was inherently criminal. In contrast to arguments offered by identity-based criticism of Ridge’s fiction, Freemont’s impetus to research and write about “Joaquin” comes not from a personal desire for revenge, but rather from the writer’s acquaintance with “a Joaquin” a decade earlier. While Ridge and Freemont claim to enter the act of literary production in order to counterbalance false accusations of Joaquin’s irredeemable criminality, Freemont’s motivations offer a stark contrast to Ridge’s shadowy visions of his father’s corpse and the Cherokee factional wars.

Allende’s Jacob Freemont plays an even more active role than John Rollin Ridge did when writing the narrative body of the elusive bandit into existence. Not only does Freemont write the book, but he also composes almost all of the articles about “Joaquin” that appear in the newspapers between 1851 and 1853. In truth, while Ridge clearly appropriated threads for his fictional biography from the newspapers of that time, he did not author anything in the newspapers regarding Joaquin. By making the majority of Murrieta’s textuality “come from” this singular writer, Allende could simply be reinforcing the fact that all Murrieta stories ultimately derive from Ridge’s. Allende’s character is also comparable to Joaquin himself in that he is a composite: Jacob Freemont is both Ridge and Ridge’s detractors. Freemont constructs Murrieta’s textual body while also challenging the veracity of the severed Head on exhibition. Allende’s Freemont is essentially an amalgamation of all Anglophone writers in California who published something about Joaquin in the early 1850s.

Jacob Freemont does not construct his Joaquin entirely from his own imagination; instead, like Ridge, he relies on the imaginations of others to fuel his own. After the ambiguous “Joaquin” is introduced to the public consciousness through “brief news items” in 1851, Jacob Freemont become immersed in the idea of the character. Like “Freemont” himself, it was entirely possible that “Joaquin Murrieta” had changed his last name upon arrival in the U.S., especially if “Joaquin Andieta” was a fugitive from justice in Chile. Charged with memories of Andieta and a seemingly endless capacity to fabricate, sympathetic to the cause of Mexicans disenfranchised by the racist 1850 laws, and inspired by exaggerated local tales of the impossible exploits of the omnipresent bandit, Jacob Freemont decides to respond to the vague and anonymous newspaper articles of 1851 by giving shape to Murrieta in his own editorials:

In that climate of violence and revenge, the figure of Joaquin Murieta was on the way to becoming a symbol. Jacob Freemont took it upon himself to fan the flames of Murieta’s celebrity: his sensationalist articles had created a hero for Hispanics and a devil for Americans. (338)

The character that Fremont begins to fabricate is, of course, the same one molded by Ridge. However, Allende frames the production of Fremont's "dime novel" in relation to popular demand. Fremont receives "dozens of letters" in response to his articles, letters that express great interest in the bandit (338). One such letter is from "a young girl in Washington who was ready to sail halfway around the world in order to marry that 'Robin Hood'" (338).

In an ironic comment on the perpetually absent body of Joaquin Murrieta, Allende claims that Jacob Fremont has become the people's expert on Murrieta "[w]ithout ever having seen him" (338). After the popular demand gives Fremont a sense of purpose, he "decided he must interview this Joaquin, if the fellow really existed, and write his biography, and if it were a fable he would turn it into a novel" (339). Fremont then begins his own search for Joaquin:

Following Murrieta's trail, he passed through established towns, with school, library, church, and cemetery, and others whose only signs of culture were a brothel and a jail. Saloons thrived in all of them, they were the centers of social life. Jacob Fremont would install himself there, asking questions, and so began constructing—with some truths and a mountain of lies, the life—or the legend—of Joaquin Murrieta. (341)

Allende then describes how Fremont's research yields no concrete answers, only more exaggerated tales and ultimately more questions. Unable to find the physical body of Murrieta, Fremont nonetheless begins to mold the textual body of Murrieta in the process of writing his novel: "As he did not want to admit defeat, he invented in his articles brief meetings between cock's crow and midnight in mountain caves and forest clearings. After all, who was going to contradict him?" (342). While working on his novel, Fremont continues to publish articles about Joaquin in the newspapers, enabling Allende to describe how fictional tracts beget more fictional tracts: "His articles on Joaquin Murieta had become the hottest item in the press. Every day came new testimonials confirming what he had written; dozens of individuals swore they had seen Murieta and described him exactly as the character Fremont had invented" (357). Although Allende clearly suggests that Joaquin Andieta is Joaquin Murrieta, she never suggests that this connection is remotely factual, thus tapping into the lack of evidence which has propelled the life of the enigmatic bandit for one hundred and fifty years.

In her imaginative revisitations of Ridge's role in the creation of Joaquin Murrieta, Allende alters the chronology of events. She has Fremont writing about "Joaquin Murrieta" in the newspapers as early as 1851, and she has Fremont's novel published *before* the severed Head of Murrieta is exhibited across the state. This is, of course, untrue. The name "Joaquin Murrieta" was never singularly associated with all of the crimes attributed to him until the severed Head was dubiously presented as evidence of itself in 1853; and Ridge's 1854 novel was the first text to provide a coherent narrative linking all the crimes to the singular Murrieta. But Allende is less concerned with regurgitating canonical history than she is with unsettling it. In contrast to Ridge's relentless assertions that the Head did belong to Joaquin, Allende represents the widespread distrust of Harry Love's Rangers and their claims to the Head's authenticity through none other than Jacob Fremont. Indeed, before the Head is even presented to the public, Allende transforms Fremont into the mouthpiece



of the concerns voiced by Jose M. Covarrubias in 1853, that a death warrant without specific evidence would create problems for all Mexicans and Californios: “As Jacob Freemont had pointed out in his newspaper, they were condemning a man to death without knowing his identity, without having proved his crimes, and without a trial: Captain Love’s mission was tantamount to a lynching” (385). After the Head goes on display, Freemont—the author of the fabricated biography—rejects it: “But as Jacob Freemont reported, the matter was not entirely cleared up; the story smelled of fabrication” (398). If anyone should be able to detect fabrication, it would seem to be him. Ultimately, Allende’s revisions of the Ridge presence in Murrieta’s narrative production rework the dynamic between journalism, the novel, and state-sanctioned violence against the Mexican body politic to suggest that the originary (Ridge) text was overtly (rather than covertly) pitted against the state, its political legacy, and its assertions of truth.

While Jacob Freemont is surely sensational, Allende’s fictional character is not nearly as complex as the actual John Rollin Ridge. In the case of the California journalist who “wrote the book” on Joaquin, the truth is stranger and more interesting than the fiction. In removing Ridge and his family history from the production of Joaquin Murrieta as a literary artifact, Allende likewise removes the Cherokee subtext from the narrative. She follows the tradition of appropriating and reconfiguring the typical Murrieta plot in order to suit personal agendas and nationalist narratives. Allende removes Cherokee elements from the production of the cultural icon in order to clear space to project Chilean elements instead. Such revisions may not sit well with scholars of Native American literature, for they demonstrate a continuation of the pattern of rhetorical and discursive removals long-practiced in Anglo-American literature.<sup>126</sup> Cheli Reutter’s claim that *Daughter of Fortune* validates colonialist paradigms might seem supported by this excision of the Cherokee back-story. However, Allende’s removal of the Cherokee subtext accompanies Allende’s deliberate inclusion of Mapuches, the *Indios* native to Chile. Indeed, in his former career as “Jacob Todd,” Jacob Freemont had embezzled British money on the pretense that he was selling Bibles and Christianizing Mapuches, an ironic scenario that satirizes the system of textual production inherent to the delivery of Christianity to colonized people. Allende frames the back-story of her “California journalist” in relation to the Mapuches. In conjunction with Joaquin Andieta’s own indigenous roots and Mama Fresia role in Eliza’s story, Jacob Freemont’s former life in Chile enables *Daughter of Fortune* to project images of indigenous Chilean cultures upon the narrative body of “Joaquin.”

As a Chilean ex-patriot herself, Allende uses the canvas of the typical Murrieta narrative to do precisely what Pablo Neruda does with *Fulgor y Muerte*: she projects her “personal identity” between “the fantasy and the history of things” (Neruda, Foreword). Allende’s exploration of a multicultural and diasporic Chilean woman’s identity within the “fantasy and history” of the Murrieta archive becomes particularly evident upon analysis of the various anachronisms in *Daughter of Fortune*. Allende retrofits the historical details of her narrative to align them with the contemporary paradigms that she champions, particularly in relation to the textuality of national identity and the capacity for transracial love.

Allende’s anachronisms clearly demonstrate that her novel is a literary invention about literary inventions. One such anachronism is the name of the Santos Tornero Bookshop, the grounds where Joaquin meets his literary inventor several years before the

Gold Rush. In truth, Recaredo Santos Tornero, who was the first major literary voice and publisher to emerge in Chile, did not open his printing house in El Amendral until 1880. Santos Tornero was born in 1842, and there was certainly no bookshop named after him in 1845 where Jacob Todd could have met Joaquin. However, Santos Tornero published translations of many French texts, an implicit reference to the “mediocre translations” of French philosophies that spark Joaquin’s imagination as an impoverished teenager in Valparaiso. Allende’s invocation of Santos Tornero also points to the fact that the Chilean Joaquin was always a product of revisionary translation, a subtle reminder that the “original” textual body of the Chilean Joaquin was Robert Hyenne’s 1862 translation of the *Police Gazette* appropriation of the Ridge novel. Furthermore, Santos Tornero put Chile on the hemispheric literary map with his 1872 publication, *Chile Ilustrado*. He was recognized for his work at the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition, and became the first national literary icon to emerge from Chile.<sup>127</sup> In this way, Santos Tornero’s recognition as a Chilean cultural icon reflects Joaquin Murrieta’s role as a national icon. In making Santos Tornero’s press a place where the body of Joaquin has been seen, Allende conflates the process of becoming a cultural icon with the process of printing such iconography into existence. In this anachronistic reference to Santos Tornero, Allende humorously stages Joaquin meeting his literary inventor in an imaginary bookshop.

Two other anachronisms, these from the 1860s, also help to illuminate aspects of how Allende reconfigures the 1850s in regards to textual generativity and multiracial consciousness. First, Allende employs the term “dime novel” when describing Freemont’s imaginary biography: “The story Jacob Freemont was spinning had the earmarks of a dime novel” (358). Whether intentional or not, Allende’s reference to a text from the 1850s as a “dime novel” is anachronistic, and it reflects a certain degree of historical conflation that is evident when contemporary scholars refer to Ridge’s text as a “dime novel.” The phrase “dime novel” enters the marketplace in 1860 with the inaugural books in Beadle’s Dime Library. While Ridge’s novel “most certainly qualified as an example of the kind of sensation fiction that became popular in the 1840s and ’50s” (Rifkin 27), it is not by definition the dime novel that many scholars have erroneously described it as. While Ridge’s text provides the baseline narrative upon which Joseph E. Badger would produce three dime novels about Murrieta in the 1880s for Beadle’s Dime Library, Ridge’s text itself does not fit this classification. The truth is that Ridge’s book is the *ur-dime novel*, the prototype of what would eventually evolve, with the help of the *Police Gazette*’s appropriations, into the dime novel genre that was widely popular between the eras of the American Civil War and World War II. In identifying Freemont’s book with a genre that did not exist in 1853, Allende provides a retrospective glimpse at how the Murrieta narrative inspired future textual production. Indeed, regardless of his intentions at the time, Ridge helped to create the dime novel genre, a legacy that Allende’s anachronism subtly calls forth.

Allende’s references to “Union Square” in San Francisco demonstrate the potential for multiracial “unity” that she imagines beneath the surface of standard narratives about the California Gold Rush. The block of San Francisco named “Union Square” was given its moniker during the American Civil War, reflective of the fact that even though California was not an active participant in the war, the city of San Francisco was heavily supportive of the anti-slavery Union cause. *Daughter of Fortune* twice references Union Square by name

during the early 1850s, once in relation to Tao's actions and once in relation to Eliza's. In the case of Tao Chi'en, after establishing himself as a medic in Chinatown, Tao "moved to a fine house on the edge of Chinatown, a few blocks from Union Square" (367). One of his reasons for moving is the political cause that finds him in San Francisco: saving the lives of young Chinese girls who are sold into sexual slavery and shipped to the U.S. For Allende's contemporary readers, this dynamic links Eliza and Tao to present-day abolitionists who work to disrupt and dismantle the insidiously lucrative and seemingly omnipresent business of sexual slavery and human trafficking. However, when placed in the context of the mid-nineteenth century, this scenario is highly reminiscent of the "underground railroad" in the Eastern U.S. prior to the Civil War. As such, Allende likens the sexual slavery of Chinese girls in *Daughter of Fortune* to chattel slavery in the East; and she links the actions of Tao Chi'en to the abolitionist and resistance movements against chattel slavery in America.

Allende links Eliza to Union Square near the very end of the novel in terms of transnational and multiracial unions. When Eliza first emerges in her female attire, she wants to have her picture taken for Miss Rose. Eliza gathers her box of Joaquin's letters, dons a dress (minus the corset), and goes to a photographer on "Union Square, where there were several photography shops" (395). It is after her daguerreotype is produced that Eliza finally destroys Joaquin's love letters, symbolic of her liberation from the master plot. In Eliza's liberation from the idea of being Joaquin's lover, she opens herself to the real connection that she has with Tao Chi'en. As an interracial couple, Tao and Eliza prefigure the multinational multitudes across America today, especially in San Francisco. As Allende retrofits the details of 1850s California to suit her vision of the past as pretext for our transnational present, she portrays San Francisco as a site of inter-ethnic "union" by framing her own protagonists as precedents for an integrated and transracial twenty-first century. In a passage where Allende inserts her own narrative voice into the novel, she offers a retrospective vision of the unspoken attraction between Tao and Eliza during their early days in Sacramento in 1850:

Many years later, going over the notes in her diary for that period, Eliza asked herself with amazement why neither of them had recognized the undeniable attraction they felt, why they had used the pretext of sleep to touch each other but feigned coolness during the day. She concluded that at the time loving someone of another race seemed impossible; they believed there was no place for a couple like them anywhere in the world. (242)

Allende suggests that characters like Tao and Eliza were helping to make such a place, as were many others among the multicultural multitudes of the time. Allende's novel embodies the uncertain transitionality of the time, where "no one was who he seemed: the stevedore on the dock might be a Latin American aristocrat, and the coach driver a New York lawyer" (320). John Rollin Ridge expressed similar observations, with strikingly congruent language, in the letters he wrote to his mother and uncle who remained in or near the Cherokee Nation.<sup>128</sup> Ironically, while Ridge was *actually* involved in shaping the multiracial landscape of early American California, Allende removes his particular story from the original making of the Murrieta archive in order to produce her own vision of a larger, trans-Pacific multiracial canvas with roots indigenous to England, Chile, and China, rather

than a more typically “American” canvas with trans-Atlantic roots in England and Native America.

In her efforts to visualize that which may have been invisible in the 1850s and to make the subaltern speak in the process, Allende ultimately does what everyone has been doing to the Murrieta narrative since John Rollin Ridge introduced the character to the global stage in 1854. Allende projects her own identity, her own ideals and visions, upon the liminal zone where legend and history become indistinguishable. In an interview included as a postscript to the Harper Modern Classics edition of the novel, Allende states, “*Daughter of Fortune* has to be about diversity because California, especially San Francisco, was founded by people of many races” (“Conversation” 9). Just as Neruda’s play aims to give Joaquin a retroactive birth certificate, Allende’s novel retroactively certifies the existence of, the interchange between, and the possibility of genuine love across racial and national boundaries during the era of the city’s founding. As with every other Murrieta narrative ever produced, Allende projects authorial desire and fantasies upon a (re)production of the Murrieta narrative. Allende once stated, “I never had accepted the fact that I was born a woman,” and earlier in her life she believed that she “would have liked to be a man,” prompting Yanira Paz to claim that Eliza’s cross-dressing allows Allende to live out her own transgendered desires: “En esta sentido Elias es la proyeccion literaria de este deseo de Allende” (42).<sup>129</sup> In sum, Allende’s literary project with *Daughter of Fortune* fully embodies the spirit of the Murrieta narrative. Allende makes the narrative completely new again by re-imagining the inherited plot and re-projecting it through her own personal visions, desires, and retrospective perceptions of the Gold Rush from the turn of the twenty-first century. In the process, she reinvents the act of literary invention, mobilizing the generative technology of language that continues to give birth to Joaquin, his charismatic gaze, and his litany of problems.

### **“I’m Not Sure of Anything”: Allende’s Tresdedos, the Absent Body of Murrieta, and Alternative Modes of Resistance**

Allende embraces an ambiguous postmodern globalism and the emergent transnationalism of the new millennium. Yet with these cultural ambiguities, Allende does not take an ambiguous attitude toward either American nationalist violence or the anti-American violence that develops in retaliation. Mortal violence is never sanctioned in Allende’s text. Allende’s Three-Fingered Jack deviates entirely from most twentieth-century representations that, increasingly, portray Jack as a comic character. In contrast, Allende insists that there is nothing funny about the kinds of murder that Jack typically commits in the nineteenth-century Murrieta narratives. As evidence of Allende’s efforts to retroactively articulate subjectivities of the mid-nineteenth-century transnational multitude, *Daughter of Fortune* is the first Murrieta narrative to render complex and well-developed Chinese characters. Rather than delivering grotesque imagery of Jack torturing throngs of Chinese miners, Allende focuses on the plight of Chinese women in 1850s California. Whereas the Latinocentric Murrieta narratives of the 1960s erase Three-Fingered Jack’s brutalization of Chinese miners in order to sanction the racialized violence inherent to Joaquin’s rebellion,

Allende's *Daughter of Fortune* utilizes its Chinese characters to sanction a nonviolent and multiracial rebellion against sexual slavery.

Eliza Sommers first encounters Jack in January of 1850, during her stint as pianist and scribe with Joe Bonecrusher's traveling brothel. Just before she introduces the notorious Jack, Allende describes "one of the worst ice storms ever seen in those parts" of the Sierra Nevada (305). One morning during this ice storm, there are "a few faint knocks" on the door of the brothel (305). It is Jack, alone and "half-frozen" (305). Eliza's companions warm the stranger and revive him, at which point Allende introduces him and his story: "His nose, feet, and hands were frostbitten. He was a campesino from the Mexican state of Sonora, he said, who had come to the California placers like thousands of his compatriots. His name was Jack, a name that doubtlessly wasn't his, but after all, no one else in that household used the one he was born with" (306). "Jack" awakens, paranoid and screaming, refusing to see a doctor:

No one was to know he was there, he commanded, with such ferocity that none of them dared cross him. Explanations were not necessary: it was obvious the man was in trouble with the law, and that town, with a gallows in the middle of the square, was the last place in the world a fugitive would want to look for asylum. (306)

Eliza thinks "he smelled of evil" (306). In spite of Jack's vileness, Allende suggests that the overall power of Jack's sadistic cruelty pales in comparison to the larger leveling power of the earth: "only the cruelty of the storm had forced him there" (306). Allende attributes Jack's physical deformities to the storm, not the U.S.-Mexican War: "After three days, Jack had regained some of his strength, but he lost the tip of his nose and two fingers on his left hand were showing signs of gangrene" (306). In short, Allende's Jack is relatively powerless, and his survival depends upon the goodwill of Joe Bonecrusher's troupe.

Allende's most substantial reconfiguration of Jack's role in the narrative concerns how he loses two fingers on his iconic hand. As the gangrene begins to take hold of Jack's fingers, it becomes clear to everyone in the traveling brothel that the fingers require amputation. At first, no one in Joe Bonecrusher's crew, not even strongman "Babalu the Bad," is willing to cut off Jack's fingers. But then Eliza steps up and offers to do it, not because she necessarily wants to cut his fingers, but because she can see the discord that the problem is bringing to her eccentric adoptive family within the brothel. Everyone is shocked when the young "Chile Boy" volunteers to amputate the fingers. Recalling Tao Chi'en's stories of amputations and extracting bullets, Eliza has a better medical sense of how to sever the fingers than any of her colleagues. Jack is fed whisky until he loses consciousness, at which point Eliza employs a hot knife and a hammer to do the deed. In a moment of perfect irony, Babalu tells Eliza after the amputation, "You're a real man, Chile Boy" (308).

As she does throughout *Daughter of Fortune*, Allende revises the typical Murrieta narrative twice in this scene: not only does Jack lose his fingers in a brothel in 1850, rather than while fighting Americans in 1846, but Allende also makes Eliza the agent of his deformative change. Eliza is disguised when she amputates Jack's fingers; and Allende implies that Jack's entire pre-existing narrative is a kind of disguise, a narrative façade beneath which something more complex has occurred. Jack, who was "forever edgy, defiant, ready to spring at the hint of an imagined provocation," shows "no sign of gratitude for the help he had received, just the opposite; when the whisky wore off and he learned that

his trigger finger had been amputated, he let loose a string of curses and threats, swearing that the dog who had mutilated his hand would pay with his life” (308). Babalu then grabs Jack and lifts him up “like a doll,” claiming responsibility for the amputation, and asks, “Any problem with that?” (309). Of course, Jack does not attempt to kill the strongman. Instead, he merely “sneaked off at night without telling anyone good-bye” before his fingers had fully healed (308). Jack leaves the brothel *believing in a fictional narrative about who amputated his fingers*. The story that he believes to be true is no more “real” than Eliza’s masculinity, but he believes it nonetheless. This dynamic of half-truths at the core of accepted historical truths is reflective of *Daughter of Fortune* as a whole, as is Allende’s impetus to insert female agency into official histories that attribute nearly all agency to males.

In spite of the stark contrasts between Allende’s de-ideologizing narrative inversions, her Three-Fingered Jack serves a function in *Daughter of Fortune* that is strikingly similar to Pablo Neruda’s Tresdedos. Both of these Chilean writers use Jack as a means of bridging the distance between the absent body of Joaquin and those who seek him. While Neruda’s Tresdedos rallies the repressed masses together to follow Joaquin, Allende’s Jack connects Eliza to the idea of Joaquin’s physical body:

Once when she was handing Jack a bowl of soup, Eliza worked up the courage to ask him about Joaquin Andieta.  
 “Murieta?” he asked, suspicious.  
 “Andieta.”  
 “Don’t know him.”  
 “Maybe it’s the same person,” Eliza suggested.  
 “What do you want with him?”  
 “He’s my brother. I came from Chile to find him.”  
 “What’s your brother look like?”  
 “He’s not very tall, and he has black hair and eyes and white skin, like me, but we don’t look alike. He’s thin and muscular, brave, and passionate. When he talks, everyone listens.”  
 “That’s Joaquin Murieta all right, but he’s not Chilean, he’s Mexican.”  
 “Are you sure?”  
 “Sure? I’m not sure of anything, but if I see Murieta I’ll tell him you’re looking for him.” (309-310)

Jack leaves the next night, and Eliza never knows for sure if Murieta and Andieta are the same Joaquin. Regardless, Allende’s Three-Fingered Jack clearly functions as the connection between Joaquin and his “follower.” Of course, as with everything regarding the illusory Joaquin, there is no concrete reason to “be sure of anything.” But Jack is one of only two characters in Allende’s novel to claim to have had personal contact with Joaquin. The other, Jacob Freemont, is almost certainly fabricating all of his stories. Jack, on the other hand, has little reason to lie to Eliza. He becomes her first human link to the narrative of Joaquin’s experiences in California. This is pivotal for Eliza’s ultimate liberation from the typical Murieta plot at the end of the novel, for the more she begins to imagine that her former lover is in league with this “evil” Jack, the more she begins to dream of alternative trajectories for herself. A few years later, when Eliza reads newspaper reports about the exploits of Joaquin Murieta and Three-Fingered Jack, her inability to sanction their

purported actions is what catalyzes her conscious withdrawal from the prescribed role of Joaquin's lover in the typical *Murrieta* narrative.

Allende uses Jack to wryly play with the question of Joaquin's identity as either Mexican or Chilean. In doing so, she reflects upon the ultimate inability to know the true story of either Joaquin or his most fabled captain. In regard to Joaquin's origins, Jack's uncertainty leaves the issue of Joaquin's surname and nationality unsettled. If Eliza can so easily recognize that "Jack" was not originally named "Jack," then it seems unlikely that anyone could truly confirm or deny Joaquin's true name. This dynamic is central to Allende's novel overall: appearances and names are deceiving, and it is just as easy to generate false facades as it is to reject them. Allende suggests that the true stories may seem far-fetched, or perhaps a bit mundane, in comparison to the heroicizing mythologies. But unless there is incontrovertible evidence to disprove the alternative truths Allende proposes, they should at least be entertained. While Allende's narrative seems improbable, there exist no definitive facts that would entirely debunk the potential truth of her story.

By challenging these patterns of surface narratives and underlying realities, Allende subtly undermines the rationale behind all violence in the *Murrieta* archive. In *Murrieta*'s extremely violent narrative, all violence is usually framed as a response to prior violence. Three-Fingered Jack's assaults upon Americans are premised as originating with the Bear Flag Revolt and the U.S.-Mexican War; and his brutalization of Chinese people stems from an internalization of American xenophobia since "no one cared for so alien a class" as the Chinese (Ridge, *Joaquin* 97). By eliminating borderland battlefields from the narrative of how Jack lost his fingers, Allende challenges her readers to question the ethnocentric processes by which fictional narratives (or half-truths at best) are transformed into foundational stories manipulated to justify meeting violence with more violence. In suggesting that there was no original point of racist or nationalized violence in the "true" disfiguring of Three-Fingered Jack, Allende posits that if this long-accepted "truth" can be reimagined, so can the retaliatory basis for culturally sanctioned violence in our current era of globalization and transnationality. Allende does, however, sanction the recuperative violence that Eliza does to Jack's hand. Using a knife—the preferred weapon of both Joaquin and Three-Fingered Jack, as well as John Rollin Ridge—Eliza saves Jack's life, or at least the rest of his hand. Surgical violence is clearly sanctioned if it saves lives or enables people to endure.

Allende's rather brief engagement with Three-Fingered Jack has multivalent reverberations in terms of "justice" and "resistance" in her novel, particularly in relation to Chinese characters. Allende's novel weaves together its various Chinese subplots by dramatizing changes in Tao Chi'en's perspectives of Chinese women who work as prostitutes. While these details do not have an explicit connection to the images of Three-Fingered Jack rendered in Allende's novel, there is absolutely an implicit connection, given the fact that in all *Murrieta* narratives from Ridge to Burns, Three-Fingered Jack's name almost always appears on the same pages as the word "Chinese." Instead of perpetuating the literary slaughter of Chinese innocents, Allende's novel portrays a resistance movement to recuperate the subaltern Chinese women who are forced to work as sex slaves in San Francisco.

Tao enacts a kind of rebellion that is a direct inversion of Joaquin's. Back in the early 1840s in Canton, Tao "had begun his practice of medicine with prostitutes" (347). Under

the instructions of his first mentor, Tao “had used them as rented flesh and to practice with his master’s gold acupuncture needles, but he had never paused to think about their souls... He felt sorry for them, but it never occurred to him that their fate might be modified” (347). After two years in California, however, Tao’s perspectives on life and destiny have become much more fluid and subject to revision. Infected by Eliza’s burgeoning love of freedom, Tao begins to change the way he sees the droves of young Chinese women who are sold into sexual slavery in California. His experiences in California cause him to challenge the cultural assumption he learned “in China” that “more or less all women are slaves” (347). Tao, like Eliza, has been transformed in California in ways that propel him to question, and ultimately subvert, the dominant narratives he has inherited from his birth culture. He devises a plan to save these Chinese women. He knows that it is “impossible” to stop the larger system of trafficking sex slaves into America, but, as he tells Eliza, “I can save a few if you help me” (352). Tao uses his status as Chinese medic to gain access to sickened sex slaves, all of whom are essentially sentenced to death once they lose their health.<sup>130</sup>

In developing his system for liberating these sickly young women from certain death, Tao Chi’en employs a shrewd business sense, outright bribery, and blatant acts of deception. These methods require Tao to operate outside the bounds of state law. Joaquin clearly operates outside legal boundaries as well. But as Eliza tells Tao, “If the authorities won’t help you, good people will” (353). Tao’s resistance to the coercive societal forces that reduce these young women to toys for American men provides a stark contrast to Joaquin Murrieta’s rebellion against the discriminatory forces fostered by an unjust society. Rather than using his personal and family suffering to sanction a violent wave of retaliation, Tao uses his personal and family suffering to sanction a nonviolent resistance against the forces that mark these girls as subhuman. In nearly all Murrieta narratives, Chinese characters play a role in regards to notions of sanctioned violence and justified resistance, but Allende’s is to date the only Murrieta narrative that deploys Chinese characters to retract extralegal, yet culturally sanctioned, violence and to justify extralegal nonviolent methods of resistance.

Allende’s *Daughter of Fortune* is a revolutionary text in the Murrieta archive. A century and a half after Ridge’s originary text, Allende’s novel offers a Murrieta narrative that has come “full circle” and reincarnated Ridge’s contradictory portrayal of any armed retaliation. But unlike Ridge, whose criticism of both sides ultimately suggests that there is no human solution to the cycles of violence, Allende suggests a third path. It is a path that she takes by reconfiguring the entire archive in order to “lose the plot.” Once liberated from the predetermined repression of the typical plot, Joaquin’s “mistress” is no longer doomed to suffer physical traumas or die. Rather, she liberates herself from the urge to follow the prescribed plot, therefore liberating herself from the need to locate and identify Joaquin and the need to subjugate herself to him. These “needs” were ultimately the products of an adolescent fantasy. In abandoning the need to find Joaquin, Eliza frees herself from the ready-made tragic fate inherent to Joaquin’s youthful rebellion. Allende’s hero has no need to identify herself or others in the novel’s final line. Rather, by altering the canonical phrase “I am Joaquin,” Allende’s final line confirms Eliza’s ultimate liberation from the liberation hero: simply, and profoundly, “I am free” (Allende 399). In *Daughter of Fortune*’s liberation from its own inherited narrative trajectory, Allende momentarily unfreezes Ridge’s paradoxes and encourages active nonviolent resistance to state- or culturally sanctioned narratives of



oppression.<sup>131</sup> Whereas Ridge's paradoxical impasses may reflect his own anti-abolitionist ideals, Allende is clear to heroicize subversive acts of abolition and liberation. Indeed, *Daughter of Fortune* historicizes the transnational slavery and trafficking of women that continues today, prodding its readers to recognize and resist these abuses of human rights.

## Conclusion

### Sanitizing Joaquin Murrieta for Mass Consumption in the United States

The legend of Joaquin Murrieta is as vital as ever. It will continue to captivate audiences due to both its universality and its divisiveness. It is universal because of Ridge's construction of Joaquin as someone who could potentially be anyone; yet it is divisive because it explicitly identifies the deadly contradictions of theory and practice in expansionist U.S. democracy. "Joaquin Murrieta" is a shorthand, ready-made image of genocidal U.S. policies and violent resistance to those policies. Given its constellation of political references, one need not exercise too much imagination to recognize why the Murrieta narrative is so divisive, particularly within the United States. But the Murrieta story, like its protagonist, has demonstrated the capacity to disguise itself. Although the Murrieta narrative is divisive when it comes out in the open, when it explicitly acknowledges itself as the story of "Joaquin Murrieta," it has often been altered and adapted into offspring narratives that endorse, rather than condemn, expansionist U.S. policy within the ideological framework of liberal Western democracy.

As my dissertation has demonstrated, Murrieta's identity is rather malleable. Just as Joaquin himself is often "disguised the most" when lurking unannounced in plain sight (Ridge, *Joaquin* 31), Joaquin's narrative has the capacity to adapt discreetly to its surroundings and endure in forms that are less easy to locate and therefore less explicitly divisive. With this dynamic in mind, I conclude my study by addressing Murrieta's "masked" endurance in the popular consciousness. In particular, I consider Murrieta's narrative continuance "beneath the mask" of institutions and characters that are less divisive than he, at least within the context of Anglocentric American culture. Just as Joaquin could be standing beside someone who is completely oblivious of El Famoso's proximity, the essential narrative of Joaquin's elusive subjectivity is often present in the American popular culture even if it is hiding in plain sight.

Consider the case of a relatively humble structure on Piedmont Avenue here in Berkeley, California. Though currently referred to as "Casa," the original name of the house was "Casa Joaquin Murrieta." Nestled between several fraternities and sororities, Casa Joaquin Murrieta was established in 1970 as the first Chicana/o student-housing cooperative at a university in the United States. It was founded "by a group of UC Xicana/o students" who "had no housing or financial aid. They pulled together to rent a former fraternity house," and it has been "a success from its establishment" (Garcia). Influenced by the spirit of the times at the height of the Chicano Movement, the name "Joaquin Murrieta" seemed appropriate to Casa's founders. At the time, due largely to the influence of Gonzales's *I Am Joaquin*, Murrieta's image was appearing on murals along Cesar Chavez and other Mexican-American leaders. For economically disadvantaged Chicano/a students, Murrieta was a figure who reflected self-determination and solidarity in the face of drastic institutional inequity. Murrieta "went outside of the institutional channels for justice because there were no other routes available to Mexicans," says former Casa resident Chris Natividad when interviewed in 2006 by Kerry Eskenas, a reporter from the university's conservative student newspaper, the *California Patriot* (Eskenas). And according to former resident Elizabeth

Mayorga, Murrieta “represents someone who does not allow himself to be victimized. He’s a Robin Hood-like figure” (Eskenas). For Chicano/a students living at Casa Joaquin Murrieta, the name of their residence was an explicit affirmation of cultural endurance and self-determination.

However, the house came under pressure to alter its name in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the shadow of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, several “patriots” expressed concern about naming an institution with connections to the university after someone believed to be the deadliest public enemy in California history. Eskenas rejects “the appropriateness of turning a person who committed murder into a role model for those who respond to injustice and discrimination today,” suggesting that “Murrieta could be compared to modern-day jihadist terrorists who claim to be acting against oppressive Western nations when they murder random, innocent civilians.” In truth, Casa Joaquin Murrieta was a haven for working-class first-generation college students, not a terrorist training facility, but the *California Patriot* article demonstrates how easily the mere idea of “Joaquin Murrieta” can stir up controversy. In short, Murrieta remains as divisive in the twenty-first century as he was in the 1850s. And as the case of Casa Joaquin Murrieta demonstrates, explicitly identifying oneself or one’s house as “Joaquin Murrieta” continues to function as an overt act of defiance that is bound to attract the scorn of a hostile American culture, even in the relatively liberal environs of Berkeley. Exclaiming “I am Joaquin” is still potentially dangerous because it transforms the subject into an image of violent resistance to American expansionism.

In 2004, Casa Joaquin Murrieta came under the operation of Berkeley’s Greenlining Institute, which describes itself as a Multi-Ethnic Public Policy Research and Advocacy Institute. The house initially kept its name after the change in ownership, and though it now explicitly supports disenfranchised students of all backgrounds, the house will always have strong roots in the Chicano Movement. However, under continuing post-9/11 pressure, the phrase “Joaquin Murrieta” was removed from the structure’s name. Now, it is referred to simply as Casa. References to Casa’s former identity have been submerged: the name, “Joaquin Murrieta,” appears only once (in parentheses) on Casa’s official website. The house has, in effect, assumed a disguise. Much like the Murrieta persona crafted by Ridge and reinvented time and time again, Casa Joaquin Murrieta found safety by linguistically cloaking itself. In this way, Casa’s public identity is reflective of a long-standing pattern in Murrieta-inspired narratives: although its original connections to Joaquin Murrieta are still evident for those willing to dig beneath the surface, these links to the original character are now primarily implicit rather than explicit. The Casa controversy demonstrates that the dominant American culture tolerates implicit self-identifying references to Murrieta; however, an explicit reference to Murrieta remains divisive and potentially self-destructive for the subject who dares to “become Joaquin” in the United States.

This tension between *explicit identification as Joaquin* and *implicit reference to Joaquin* marks the life of Ridge’s character in American popular culture. Acceptability through implication is evident in the long-standing tradition of the U.S. culture industry to sanitize the Joaquin Murrieta narrative into something less explicitly rebellious toward and condemning of the expansionist American ethos. The truth is that Joaquin Murrieta, or at least traces of Murrieta and his narrative legacy, are all around us. But because direct

identification as “Joaquin” is inherently problematic within the dominant U.S. culture, Murrieta references often take indirect and implicit shapes.

Consider the case of an iconic character who is, essentially, Joaquin Murrieta made safe for general American consumption: Zorro.<sup>132</sup> Prolific journalist and pulp fiction author Johnston McCulley introduced Zorro to the world in 1919 with *The Curse of Capistrano*, and Douglas Fairbanks’s performance solidified Zorro’s status as cultural icon in the 1920 film, *The Mark of Zorro*. The character has taken center stage in hundreds of literary, film, and television narratives since. In *Zorro Unmasked*, Sandra Curtis suggests that the Murrieta narrative “fueled McCulley’s imagination in creating Zorro” (75). Curtis contends that “Murrieta’s romantic prowess and aristocratic background, along with his concern for injustice to individuals, are certainly part of the Zorro legend” (75).<sup>133</sup> Antonio Banderas, the actor who becomes Zorro in Steven Spielberg’s recent films, *The Mask of Zorro* and *The Legend of Zorro*, takes this notion to the extreme: “Zorro is a fictional character, though he is born out of *real* figures, like Joaquin Murrieta” (qtd. in *Behind the Mask*, emphasis added). But unlike Joaquin Murrieta, Zorro actually wears a mask. The mask enables Don Diego de la Vega to transform from “the languid Don Diego you all knew” into the hero he had always “hoped one day to be” (McCulley, *Mark* 220). The Diego/Zorro split is, in the words of Don Diego himself, something of a “dual personality” (McCulley, *Sword* 37). Whereas Joaquin’s capacity to potentially be anyone reflects the generative power of language (evidenced by public declarations of “I am Joaquin!”), Don Diego relies not on language, but rather on his mask in order to become Zorro in the public eye.<sup>134</sup>

Although the mask is given primacy in the process of becoming Zorro, the phrase, “I am Zorro,” certainly echoes throughout the archives. Consider the hero’s assertion in the 1928 novel, *The Sword of Zorro*: “I am Zorro, the daring in love and war” (37). Or consider an early scene in the 1998 film, *The Mask of Zorro*, when the evil Spanish nobleman, Don Rafael Montero, asks a group of prisoners which one of them is Zorro, prompting every prisoner (excluding the actual Don Diego) to proclaim, “I am Zorro!” In these moments, the generativity of language trumps the transformativity of the mask. Each time “I am Zorro” manifests in a Zorro narrative, it is an echo of “I am Joaquin,” a reminder Zorro’s origins. It reminds us that Zorro’s heroic bipolarity is merely a gringo-safe reconfiguration of Joaquin Murrieta’s elusive and potentially ubiquitous subjectivity.

Like Zorro, the Batman mythology illuminates trace elements of Joaquin Murrieta’s elusive and rebellious subjectivity in the general American popular culture. Zorro is widely acknowledged as a progenitor of the Dark Knight. Bob Kane, the writer credited with creating Batman, readily admits, “Zorro had a major influence on me on [sic] the creation of Batman in 1939” (qtd. in Curtis 22).<sup>135</sup> Bruce Wayne is the postindustrial Don Diego de la Vega, his technology modernized and his setting transplanted from premodern California (West Coast) to postmodern Gotham City (East Coast). In contrast to Murrieta, however, Bruce Wayne *chooses* to fight oppression by becoming Batman. In the essay, “Under the Mask: Anyone Can Become Batman,” Sarah Donovan and Nicholas Richardson contend, “When Wayne witnessed the murder of his parents, he had the financial means to leave Gotham forever. However, he chose to remain and to reconstruct himself physically, mentally, and emotionally as Batman” (133). Although the transformative moment in Bruce Wayne’s life parallels Murrieta’s in that both survived deadly attacks against their families,

Joaquin was engulfed in a social order that eliminated his modes of recourse or redress. Although Bruce Wayne/Batman is surely surrounded by “corrupt politicians,” he nonetheless makes the decision “to stop being afraid and to create his own order” (Donovan and Richardson 133, 132). While Bruce Wayne’s insurrectionary transformations echo the personal suffering inherent to the story of Joaquin Murrieta, the typical Batman narrative locates transformative agency primarily in the free choice of the individual hero rather than, as Ridge puts it, “the social and moral condition of the country in which he lived” (*Joaquin* 7).

As with the phrase, “I am Zorro,” the phrase, “I am Batman,” resonates throughout the Batman archive. Consider the scene in Tim Burton’s 1989 film, *Batman*, when Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton) prepares to reveal his true identity to Vicki Vale (Kim Basinger). Wayne repeats, “I am Batman,” several times to himself, as if convincing himself that he actually is the hero in question: “I am Batman. I am Batman. I am Batman.” As Keaton’s Bruce Wayne repeats the phrase, he seems to be reminding himself that, as Batman, his “identity and reality are constructed” and that he “must be aware of this construction and embrace it” (Donovan and Richardson 130). Or consider the scene in Christopher Nolan’s 2008 film, *The Dark Knight*, when District Attorney Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart) calls a press conference in response to public frustrations with Batman. Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) is in the audience, listening as the people repeatedly demand that Batman “turn himself in.” Dent acquiesces to the public demand and says, “Very well, prepare to take the Batman into custody.” Bruce Wayne steps forward, prepared to identify himself and submit to the popular will. But much to Wayne’s chagrin, Harvey Dent holds his arms aloft and pronounces to the world, “I am the Batman.” Dent is then arrested and taken into custody, only to be rescued by the real Batman a few minutes further into the film. Dent is able to deceive the semi-hostile audience through a trick of language. The masked hero’s inherently elusive subjectivity enables the deception; and the “wrong man” is able to manipulate spectators by explicitly identifying as the subversive hero. This deceptive but effective act of “becoming Batman” through declaratory language underscores how the hero’s malleable subjectivity is a direct inheritance from Murrieta. Nolan’s Harvey Dent, like the traditional corridista who sings of Murrieta, assumes the hero’s persona through a momentary trick of language.

The phrase, “I am Joaquin,” is ever the subtext of the phrases, “I am Zorro” and “I am Batman.” Each articulation of “I am Zorro” or “I am Batman” is an implicit Murrieta reference, a reference that the writers and filmmakers may not even be aware of themselves. These lines speak directly to audience members with an archival perspective of Murrieta narratives and knowledge of how Murrieta engenders Zorro/Batman. It is as if Joaquin is still there, lingering in the shadows, a subversive element lurking just beyond the margins of the lucrative Zorro and Batman industries. Because both Zorro and Batman are made safe for general consumption in the United States, their ability to indirectly reference the Murrieta narrative shows how Murrieta’s rebellion is more readily absorbed into corporate American popular culture through implicit rather than explicit reference.

Despite Murrieta’s direct influence upon Zorro/Batman, there are significant contrasts between the Gold Rush icon and these characters. The contrasts illustrate how the U.S. culture industry has sanitized the context of Murrieta’s story while attempting to

stabilize Murrieta's inherently destabilizing ethos. For example, Zorro sanitizes Murrieta through dehistoricization and overgeneralization. Because Zorro is set pre-1848, he combats social injustices that predate American statehood and the Gold Rush.<sup>136</sup> As a Californio aristocrat, Zorro is part of the very social order against which he rebels. Unlike Murrieta, Zorro is not branded "alien" by the machinery of American statehood. If Don Diego de la Vega's priorities were different, he would not need to become Zorro. Indeed, he stands to benefit financially from the self-serving policies of the Californio elite. But when Diego becomes Zorro, he has made a decision to side with the disenfranchised common people. Just like his own progeny, Bruce Wayne, Don Diego *chooses* to wear the mask and become Zorro. In contrast, Murrieta has no choice.<sup>137</sup> American laws legalized the brutalities inflicted upon thousands of Mexicans in California during the 1850s. Murrieta had no legal recourse within the American system of gold-frenzied venture capitalism and squatter's rights. Murrieta narratives remind Americans of the injustice that undergirds American wealth and empire. But whereas Murrieta's rebellion vilifies expansionist U.S. policies, Zorro's acts of political insurrection target pre-American policies of imperial Mexico in the Northwest Frontera. Because of this dynamic, Zorro narratives ultimately endorse the Americanization of California.<sup>138</sup>

In essence, the swashbuckling Zorro is methadone Murrieta for an American public that needs its fix of romantic rebellion without self-reflexive condemnation of the brutality of U.S. expansionism. In *The Mark of Zorro*, the masked hero (Douglas Fairbanks) rouses fellow caballeros to action against the government's manacles of "oppression." The caballero community quickly agrees when Zorro cries out, "Justice for all!" In this case, Zorro's ideology is not nearly as complicated as Joaquin's, whose ideals of universal justice terminally grate against the racialized violence that both criminalizes him and motivates his band of followers. Joaquin's rebellion reminds us that American independence from Europe initiated a cataclysmic march across the continent. In contrast, Zorro's sheen of one-dimensionality—wherein the European-based Spanish system is inherently oppressive and the common people are in need of liberation—enables Zorro to reflect foundational American ideologies of revolution against corrupt European systems. While "Joaquin Murrieta" becomes the bandit in response to specific Anglo attacks upon his family, Zorro becomes the bandit to balance the more general forces of "oppression." Zorro's overly generalized origins and ethos are expressed quite clearly in the introduction to the 1920 film:

Oppression—by its very nature—creates the power that crushes it. ... In California, nearly a hundred years ago, with its warmth, its romance, its peaceful beauties, this dread disease oppression, had set in. ... Then—out of the mystery of the unknown—appeared a masked rider who rode up and down the great highway—punishing and protecting and leaving upon the oppressor the Mark of Zorro. (*Mark*)

In this formulation, the American agents of "oppression" which traumatize Murrieta are obscured, sanitized, and generalized into a gringo-friendly "oppressor." While the Murrieta narrative makes no mystery of the origins of Joaquin's transformation into a highwayman, *The Mark of Zorro* belies its own Anglocentric selective amnesia in having the hero emerge from "the mystery of the unknown." The fact that Anglophone Zorro narratives hardly distinguish between pre-revolution Spanish-controlled Mexico and post-revolution Mexico

from 1821 onward speaks volumes about the degree to which historical precision matters when characterizing the “oppression” which Zorro “by [his] very nature” combats.<sup>139</sup>

Much like Zorro, Batman combats oppression of and terrorism against the defenseless. Curiously, on occasions when Zorro and Batman make explicit references to Joaquin Murrieta, they do so in order to subsume their ancestor within a context that de-emphasizes the anti-Mexican oppression that was rampant in Anglo California during the Gold Rush. While Batman’s futurist context would seem to preclude Joaquin Murrieta from explicitly entering a Batman narrative, the Dark Knight actually travels back to nineteenth-century California to arrest his progenitor in a comic book from 1950.<sup>140</sup> As Robert Greenberger explains:

During the days of the California Gold [R]ush, Joaquin Murrieta was a desperado who killed to jump the claims of other prospectors. When Bruce Wayne sought to discover what happened to the grandfather of a friend, he had Professor Carter Nichols send him and Dick Grayson back to the nineteenth century. There they apprehended Murieta for the death of the missing man (269).

This Murrieta is a mere desperado searching for land to steal, precisely the kind of criminal that the Dark Knight must contain in order to protect the innocent American public. In this narrative twist, the progeny absorbs the progenitor in order to whitewash issues of racialized injustice from the Murrieta narrative. This Murrieta is no victim of indiscriminate injustice against his beloved family, as was young Bruce Wayne, but rather a mere perpetrator of racialized anti-gringo violence. Lacking his own compelling ethos, this Murrieta is more of a proto-Joker terrorist than a justified agent of retribution. This 1950 Batman narrative echoes the *California Police Gazette* in its unrepentant criminalization of Joaquin and its insistence that Joaquin’s insurrection must be cropped and contained within Batman’s supposedly pro-victim paradigm. By arresting its own progenitor—or rather, a partial image of its progenitor—*Batman* retrofits the California Gold Rush with anti-Mexican blinders, attempting to sanitize its own narrative by selectively purging it of the unsettling facts of Yankee brutality during the Americanization of California.

Spielberg’s production, *The Mask of Zorro*, also absorbs the original Murrieta narrative, but it heroicizes, rather than criminalizes, Joaquin’s banditry within the context of Spanish “oppression” in pre-American California. Indeed, before becoming Zorro, Antonio Banderas’s character is “Alejandro Murrieta,” the younger brother of Joaquin. The Murrieta brothers work together with a comedic (and English-speaking) Three-Fingered Jack to swindle money from passing wagons. But when an ahistorical Harry Love captures the Murrieta brothers and beheads Joaquin, it propels Alejandro into a lifelong quest for vengeance against the Anglo soldier. Pushing his anachronistic props to new extremities, Spielberg’s Harry Love actually carries Joaquin’s pickled head around with him in the early 1840s. The “Head of Murrieta” becomes a dehistoricized prop, signifying Murrieta’s influence upon Zorro but removing the post-1848 context of racialized U.S. imperialism. Under the tutelage of Don Diego de la Vega, who has retired from his former life of dual-personality swashbuckling, Alejandro Murrieta learns how to become Zorro in order to avenge the execution and beheading of Joaquin. Through these explicit references to Zorro’s narrative roots in the Murrieta mythos, Spielberg’s *Zorro* attempts to further sanitize Murrieta by once again reconfiguring the ancestor as the descendent, a dynamic reiterated

when Banderas's character fathers a son who is named "Joaquin." Whereas Zorro is actually born from Joaquin, Spielberg gives us a new Joaquin who is now born from Zorro. The film's sequel, *The Legend of Zorro*, gives every indication that this new Joaquin will follow his father and eventually become Zorro himself.

It has proven much easier, and much safer, to become Batman or Zorro in the United States than it is to become Joaquin Murrieta. Murrieta's rebellion never ceases to remind Americans of the unjust foundations of their nation's prosperity and modes of legality. Just like the action of becoming Joaquin Murrieta through language, explicitly representing patterns of American injustice will be received with hostility by the general American public. The course of least resistance is to reference these patterns of injustice implicitly rather than explicitly, and to dehistoricize the racialized legacy of American imperialism in the process. The dominant American culture continually works to circumscribe, contain, and ultimately reimagine Murrieta's ethos through layers of nationalistic appropriation. Murrieta's inherently subversive persona is made safe for mass consumption when it is reinvented as a seemingly pro-American persona in the likes of Zorro or Batman.

Yet, mass consumption notwithstanding, there is no reason to believe that explicit references to and adoptions of Joaquin Murrieta's persona will cease in the near future. Direct invocation of Murrieta's story, and the unique pattern of assuming his subjectivity, have left marks on the cultures of the United States and greater Mexico for 160 years. As the U.S.-Mexican border continues to be a locus of racialized violence spurred by national politics, the persona of Joaquin Murrieta remains relevant in the present. And, as is his idiom, Joaquin will continue to ensnare imaginations, to exert that "charismatic force of his gaze" upon a range of audiences. Given the ironic anti-immigrant hostilities that often characterize contemporary American culture, Joaquin Murrieta will no doubt continue his evolution as a persona which one becomes through language. Murrieta's persona will remain a ready-made means of revolting against those who blindly ally themselves with the pursuit of individualist profit at the expense of basic human rights. Particularly in the context of the seemingly endless "War on Terror," future reinventions and revisitations of Joaquin Murrieta can serve as litmus tests for the degree of racialized bias, xenophobia, and selective amnesia inherent to the process of shaping culture heroes to suit the dominant ideologies of the state.

As my study has aimed to show, awareness of Murrieta's changes across the generations will enable future readers to identify, destabilize, and undermine the potentially dehumanizing aspects implicated in such revisions. Recognition of these mutations can arm Murrieta's critical readers with the capacity to recognize how various culture ministries develop illusory and often exclusionary walls around the concepts of "culture" and "race." Joaquin Murrieta, ever the destabilizing and revolutionary trickster, wants the larger history of his narrative existence to catalyze mental liberation from exclusionary constructs. In the final words of Neruda's *Head of Murrieta*, "the gift of my wounds I entrust to the love of a friend" (173). It remains for future generations to make good on that trust.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The title of my Introduction deliberately echoes the title of Neruda's postscript to *Fulgory Muerte de Joaquin Murieta*: "Why Joaquin Murieta?" This postscript is where Neruda describes Joaquin taking "to the road of my book and gallop[ing] off with his life and drama" (180).

<sup>2</sup> In this study, the terms "Native," "Native American," "American Indian," and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably. However, "American Indian" and "Native American" refer specifically to indigenous groups within the present-day United States, whereas "Native" and "Indigenous" can refer to indigenous groups around the world. The phrase "Native American novel" refers to novels written by Native American authors. By "Native scholars," I mean scholars of Native American descent. By "Nativist scholars," I mean all people working in Native studies regardless of their identity. While the term "Nativist" has historically been used to signify individuals who espouse anti-immigrant beliefs, such as racist Anglos during the California Gold Rush, I use the term "Nativist scholars" in this study in a manner parallel to the term "Africanist scholars": it refers to anyone who studies Native Americans.

<sup>3</sup> Elias Boudinot (Ridge's uncle) translated the fictional short story, "Poor Sarah," into the Cherokee language for publication in *The Cherokee Phoenix*. While "Poor Sarah" is generally acknowledged as the first work of fiction published by a Native writer, Boudinot's role as translator rather than creator precludes him from being recognized as the author of the first work of Native American prose fiction.

<sup>4</sup> Luis Leal is the definitive source for information regarding Joaquin Murrieta, unless that information concerns John Rollin Ridge. Leal claims, "Very little information exists about the life of John Rollin Ridge" (Introduction xxv). This is inaccurate: James Parins's definitive biography of Ridge's life and works was published several years prior to Leal's work on Murrieta, and the modern revival of Ridge scholarship was well under way when Leal was doing his research. Like Leal, the historian Leonard Pitt has produced crucial scholarship that unfortunately misrepresents Ridge. Although not Latino himself, Pitt was committed to representing Chicano perspectives with respect, and his *Decline of the Californios* is a paradigm-forming work for contemporary approaches to early California historiography. Concerning Ridge, Pitt writes, "When John Rollin Ridge published his potboiler in 1853, it flopped, and he returned east to work for the betterment of his people, the Cherokees" (284). Pitt's inaccuracy regarding the publication date of *Joaquin Murieta* (it was 1854) is benign in comparison to the fact that Ridge *never* returned to Cherokee country after immigrating to California. Joseph Henry Jackson's widely circulated work on Ridge was certainly available when Pitt was researching *The Decline of the Californios*. Perhaps such information was peripheral to their central purposes, but the fact that foundational scholars like Leal and Pitt are reluctant to consult readily available scholarship on a Native writer reifies a belief held by many scholars of Native literatures: that other groups of Americans

are unconcerned with Native people and prone to reiterating falsehoods rather than determining truths.

<sup>5</sup> Interpretations of Ridge's novel by Cherokee scholars Louis Owens and Jace Weaver demonstrate an obsession with the nuances of Cherokee history and issues of mixedblood Native identity. In the process, Weaver and Owens fail to analyze the relationship between Ridge's novel and non-Native-authored texts. In Chapter One, I explore the ramifications of this kind of identity-based Native criticism.

<sup>6</sup> For examples of New Americanist engagement with Ridge, see John Carlos Rowe and Timothy Powell. While both express deep concern over the historical traumas of the Cherokee experience, Rowe and Powell engage Cherokee history in order to support larger arguments about American imperialism. Their work does not address Cherokee cultural continuance or current issues in the legal relationship between the United States and the Cherokee Nation, in particular, or American Indian nations, in general.

<sup>7</sup> A new study published in June 2011, Lori Lee Wilson's *The Joaquin Band: The History Beneath the Myth* continues this tradition of granting primacy to questions of historicity in Murrieta research.

<sup>8</sup> Nadeau and Garza take radically different approaches to historicizing Joaquin Murrieta. Nadeau's book, *The Real Joaquin*, portrays Murrieta as an over-mythologized gangster. In contrast, Garza's book, *Joaquin Murrieta: A Quest for Justice*, heroicizes Joaquin as champion of the oppressed. The contrast between their work suggests the wide range of "historical" approaches to the "real" Murrieta.

<sup>9</sup> For detailed analysis of anti-Latino exclusionism in the United States, see Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America*, and Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*. For examples of studies of Anglo American "folk" culture that omit Hispanophone productions, see the collections compiled by Carl Sandburg, John and Alan Lomax, and Harry Smith.

<sup>10</sup> For a provocative analysis of Native American influence on global history, see Jack Forbes's work, in particular *The American Discovery of Europe*.

<sup>11</sup> Ridge's inclusion in the 1990 *Heath Anthology of American Literature* coincides with the renewal of scholarly interest in his novel. There were very few scholars to offer interpretations of Ridge's *Joaquin Murrieta* prior to 1990; at the time of this writing, nearly forty scholars who have published interpretations of Ridge's novel after 1990. In 1979, in an addendum to Kenneth Rosen's "bibliography" of Native novels published in *MELUS*, Thomas King became the first Native scholar to publish a text identifying Ridge's book as a Native American novel. Paula Gunn Allen's 1986 study, *The Sacred Hoop*, offers the first analysis of the book in relation to other Native novels.

<sup>12</sup> For the most pivotal manifestations of the “masquerade thesis,” see Franklin Walker, *San Francisco’s Literary Frontier* (1939); Joseph Henry Jackson, “Introduction” to the 1955 reprint of Ridge’s original *Joaquin Murieta*; Robert Conley, “Yellow Bird: An Imaginary Autobiography” (1988); and Louis Owens, *Other Destinies* (1992).

<sup>13</sup> All direct quotations from Ridge’s novel are taken from the 1955 reprinting of the original 1854 version. For a comparison of the 1854 and 1871 editions of the novel, see Franklin Walker, “Ridge’s Life of Joaquin Murieta: The First and Revised Editions Compared.”

<sup>14</sup> Wilkins 145-150. Reflecting on his wedding in Connecticut, John Ridge writes: “[Racial prejudice is] the ruling passion of the age, and an Indian is almost considered accursed. He is frowned upon by the meanest peasant, and the scum of the earth are considered sacred in comparison to the son of nature. If an Indian is educated in the sciences, has a good knowledge of the classics, astronomy, mathematics, moral and natural philosophy, yet he is an Indian, and the most stupid and illiterate white man will disdain and triumph over *this worthy individual*. It is disgusting to enter the house of a white man and be stared full in the face with inquisitive ignorance. I find that such prejudices are more prevalent among the ignorant than among the enlightened” (qtd. in Wilkins 147).

<sup>15</sup> For analysis of larger Cherokee cultural changes in the early nineteenth-century, see Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* and *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866*. Also see Conley, *The Cherokee Nation: A History*.

<sup>16</sup> See Whitley, “‘The First White Aboriginal’: Walt Whitman and John Rollin Ridge,” for analysis of Ridge’s commencement poem and its syncretic contexts.

<sup>17</sup> John Ridge’s “authorship” of the 1829 revision of Blood Law, which ultimately sanctioned his own execution, sheds light on his son’s description of Joaquin as “an author who acted out his own tragedies” (Ridge, *Joaquin* 109).

<sup>18</sup> The Marshall Court’s 1832 ruling on *Worcester v. Georgia* identified the Cherokee Nation as a “domestic dependent nation,” a problematic term that has become the basis for Indian law in the United States. The ruling essentially declared Georgia’s occupation of Cherokee country to be illegal.

<sup>19</sup> This famous quotation from Major Ridge has been reprinted in nearly thousands of documents. However, it is most likely apocryphal. It is one of a select group of apocryphal phrases from the Trail of Tears that continue to resonate and be reprinted (others include Andrew Jackson’s “Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it” and Junaluska’s “If I had known what Jackson would do, I would have killed him myself”). Regardless of what Major Ridge actually said upon signing the Treaty of New Echota, the sentiment rings

true, for the document was certainly his “death warrant” in the eyes of a majority of the Cherokee Nation.

<sup>20</sup> Both John Ridge and Elias Boudinot expected to die for signing the Treaty of New Echota. Boudinot wrote, “We can die, but the great Cherokee Nation will be saved. They will not be annihilated; they can live” (qtd. in Wilkins 287).

<sup>21</sup> See Dale and Litton, *Cherokee Cavaliers*, for the letters Ridge sent from California to his mother and Stand Watie.

<sup>22</sup> In general, Cherokee-centric historiography is heavily supportive of Principal Chief John Ross. Accordingly, it is common to vilify or demonize the Ridge family, often by oversimplifying the viability of their options. For example, see Wilma Mankiller, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*, and Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees*.

<sup>23</sup> For critique of Ridge’s life and works from a Oklahoma Cherokee Nationalist perspective, see Angie Debo, “John Rollin Ridge,” and Clyde Ellis, “‘Our Ill Fated Relative’: John Rollin Ridge and the Cherokee People.” For a more generous analysis of Ridge’s life from an Oklahoma perspective, see Edward E. Dale, “John Rollin Ridge,” and Caroline T. Foreman, “Edward W. Bushyhead and John Rollin Ridge: Cherokee Editors in California.”

<sup>24</sup> For a California-centric reading of the emigrant Ridge as an early Californian, see Chris Burchfield, “The Sweet, Sad Song of Yellow Bird, California’s Confederate Cherokee.”

<sup>25</sup> Cook-Lynn’s “The American Indian Fiction Writers” and Warrior’s *Tribal Secrets* are emblematic of the nationalist school of theory. Vizenor’s *Narrative Chance* and *Manifest Manners* are prime representatives of the trickster school.

<sup>26</sup> Owens applies Vizenor’s arguments in *Narrative Chance* and Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia in *The Dialogic Imagination* to theorize the polyvocal dynamics and multivalent dialogic tension of American Indian novels.

<sup>27</sup> For a foundational argument on the “transformation” of European forms into Indigenous ones, see Simon Ortiz, “Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism.”

<sup>28</sup> Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*; Weaver, *That the People Might Live*; Womack, *Red on Red*.

<sup>29</sup> Ridge frequently uses the phrases “Cherokee half-breeds” and “Half-breed Cherokees” in *Joaquin Murieta*.

<sup>30</sup> By “post-Momaday,” I mean after Momaday’s 1968 novel, *House Made of Dawn*. Owens and Weaver both read Momaday’s novel as a turning point in Native literatures because the

mixedblood protagonist finds a degree of sustenance in traditional values and practices. Additionally, having received the Pulitzer Prize in 1969, *House Made of Dawn* marks a general interest in Native literatures by the larger American public.

<sup>31</sup> I do not suggest that a more literal approach to Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta* is the only way to read the novel for Cherokee-specific nuances. For example, one could follow Timothy Powell's suggestion and read Joaquin as a reformulation of the ancient Cherokee gambler character, Brass, or *Untsaiyi* (*Ruthless Democracy* 72). For further details on Brass/Untsaiyi, see James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokees*, and Robert Conley, *Brass*.

<sup>32</sup> My research into this name, Sapatarra, has not yielded any results. I am inclined to believe that Ridge concocted the name himself. Ridge describes Sapatarra's "naked majesty," a phrase taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book IV, ll.288-293). In doing so, Ridge subtly implies that his caricature of Native people is predetermined by literary tropes and images. This Milton reference works double-time. It reflects settler preconceptions in order to critique colonial ideologies while simultaneously employing canonical literary imagery to strike a recognizable chord with its more educated readers. With this reference to Sapatarra's "naked majesty," Ridge demonstrates how texts frame and determine perceptions that affect, or induce, actions. As Cox demonstrates, this pattern has been dangerous for Native people.

<sup>33</sup> Cox's point about revising colonial narratives accrues a greater irony when considering Major Ridge's infamous statement upon signing the Treaty of New Echota—"I have just signed my death warrant." John Rollin Ridge has Joaquin sign his own death warrant as well.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Heath Justice introduces the term, "Eurowestern," in *Our Fire Survives the Storm* to describe Eurocentric patterns that are prevalent in dominant cultural patterns and practice throughout the "Western" world ("Euro-American," for instance, is an inadequate term for considering Australian patterns with European roots). James Cox also uses the term in *Muting White Noise*.

<sup>35</sup> Ridge, *A Trumpet of Our Own*, 52-53.

<sup>36</sup> See Robert Conley, *The Cherokee Nation: A History*, and Andrew Denson, *Demanding the Cherokee Nation*.

<sup>37</sup> In her introduction to *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, Theda Perdue writes: "The Cherokee Nation was composed primarily of traditionalists who clung to the culture Boudinot dedicated his life to eradicating. ... At the helm of the National government were Cherokees who had abandoned the traditional way of life, but they primarily governed themselves and not the masses. ... Boudinot, in seeking to create a homogeneous 'civilized'

nation, was going against the widespread tendency among Cherokees to accept divergent lifestyles and customs as long as they did not jeopardize the community. And because he was part of a very small minority which tried almost to compel people to undergo a cultural transformation, other Cherokees probably viewed him with some suspicion. In contrast, John Ross was personally as highly acculturated as Boudinot, but Ross represented traditionalists and did so without exerting any pressure on them to change their beliefs or their way of life. Ross sought to protect Cherokee traditionalists; Boudinot hoped to save a Nation. But his 'Nation' of literate industrious farmers, nuclear family homesteads, English schools, Christian churches, and a republican government that would reach all levels of society had little basis in reality. It was a vision, a fantasy, a dream few of his people shared. Elias Boudinot was a tragic figure not just because he made a serious error in judgment or because he paid the ultimate price but because he could not accept his people, his heritage, or himself. He was the product of colonization, and his thoughts and deeds may well tell us as much about our own culture as about nineteenth-century Cherokees." (32-33)

<sup>38</sup> Murrieta is California's "Original Gangster." Long before there was NWA, there was Murrieta. To date, no scholarship exists that compares Murrieta to Italian-American, African-American, or other ethnic gangster narratives.

<sup>39</sup> See Lie, "Free Trade in Images," for analysis of how Zorro has been appropriated in a post-NAFTA context.

<sup>40</sup> See James Mackay's 1995 study, *William Wallace: Brave Heart*, and Alan Young and Michael J. Stead's 2002 study, *In the Footsteps of William Wallace*.

<sup>41</sup> For early twentieth-century compilations of American folk music, see Carl Sandburg, *The American Songbag*; John and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*; and Harry Smith, *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Also see Seeger, *The Incomplete Folk Singer*. For analysis of American folk ballad traditions, see Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good*; Richard and JoAnne Ruess, *American Folk Music and Left-Wing Politics, 1927-1957*; and Andrew Buckman, *Folk Consciousness and the Machine*. For analysis of the Mexican corrido tradition, consult the works of Americo Paredes and Maria Herrera-Sobek; Jose Limón, *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems*; and Martha I. Chew Sanchez, *Corridos in Migrant Memory*. See also the website of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition, *Corridos sin Fronteras: A New World Ballad Tradition*.

<sup>42</sup> Luis Leal suggests that the corrido could be as old as 1853, based on his structural analysis of "Mañana de los Cahiguas," the corrido that served as the template for the Murrieta corrido. See Introduction, lxxxiv-xcv.

<sup>43</sup> To my knowledge, there is only one song other than "Joaquin Murrieta" in the entire canon of Anglophone or Hispanophone folk ballads wherein the singer becomes a

prominent historical figure: the English ballad “Sam Hall,” which tells the tale of an eighteenth-century chimney sweeper (originally Jack Hall) accused of murder and hung on London’s notorious gallows at Tyburn. In this song, the singer *becomes* Sam Hall, chastising the listeners because “ne’er a word was spoke” in his defense, even though he might have been innocent. The situation of Sam Hall contrasts heavily with Joaquin Murrieta in that Sam Hall is, to some degree, the anonymous everyman. He is a chimney sweeper with no advocate, no public defender, and no one to ensure that he will not be falsely convicted. There is no societal mechanism to protect him from being executed by a sadistic system that provided public entertainment through grotesque spectacle. Sam Hall is the everyman executed. In contrast, Joaquin Murrieta supposedly led a large and complex rebellion against a colonial power. Like William Wallace, Joaquin Murrieta is an exceptional leader. Murrieta is precisely the kind of figure who in every other instance is sung about in third person. This comparison to “Sam Hall” should help to clarify Murrieta’s uniqueness in terms of folk ballad subjectivity. For more information on the origins of “Sam Hall,” see David Laing, “Music Hall and the Commercialization of Popular English Music,” in *Britpop and the English Music Tradition*, edited by Bennett and Stratton. See Frank Tovey, *Tyranny and the Hired Hand*, for a modern arrangement of the song. “Sam Hall” has long been transplanted to Ireland and the United States. In the U.S., it was included in the anthologies by Sandburg and Lomax, as well as others, occasionally under the ambiguous title, “Gallows Song.” The song was most recently recorded by Johnny Cash, who alters the protagonist’s identity so that he is no longer a chimney sweep.

<sup>44</sup> See Hurt, Sandburg, Lomax, and Seeger.

<sup>45</sup> It is entirely debatable as to who deserves the moniker, “the greatest of American folk heroes.” Patricia Schroeder’s study, *Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture*, demonstrates the cultural struggles over the ownership of Johnson’s image and the degree to which his behavior catalyzes cultural sanction. One could argue that as an American folk hero, Robert Johnson embodies something more distinctly “American” than John Henry. However, I speak of “folk hero” here in a more particular context, wherein “folk heroes” are the subjects of songs explicitly manufactured as “folk music.” The fact that “John Henry” is the first entry in the John and Alan Lomax collection, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, is testament to John Henry’s enduring primary significance.

<sup>46</sup> In the preface to the 1972 republication of *I Am Joaquin*, Gonzales claims, “*I Am Joaquin* was written as a revelation of myself and of all Chicanos who are Joaquin” (1).

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Jefferson described an “empire for liberty” in a letter to James Madison dated April 27, 1809. See *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 1:169. Regarding the implications of the phrase “empire for liberty,” see Wai Chee Dimmock, *Empire for Liberty*, and Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire*.

<sup>48</sup> See Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out*, and Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp*.

<sup>49</sup> The crime Feliz did not commit was the murder of U.S. General Joshua Bean. Ridge's novel references the Bean murder, but it does so in order to support Ridge's illusory claim that all crimes attributed to Joaquin were actually performed, or at least organized, by a single individual.

<sup>50</sup> "Placers" refer to gold mines. The term "placer mining" basically means gold mining in a riverbed. Many hydraulic technologies for mining gold from rivers were employed across California during the Gold Rush. Current "Placer County" California reflects the fact that much gold mining occurred here in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Readers should recognize this context for the term "placer," which will by necessity appear in any detailed discussion of Gold Rush California.

<sup>51</sup> See Nadeau, *The Real Joaquin Murieta*.

<sup>52</sup> There were multiple kinds of racialized gangs in Gold Rush California, such as the white Irish Hounds. The degree to which Mexican gangs were actually responsible for all killing of Anglos is certainly debatable. See Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, and Pfaelzer, *Driven Out*.

<sup>53</sup> See Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*. Hobsbawm informs the paradigm of current scholarship on social banditry, and he addresses Murrieta's dual signification for Anglophone and Hispanophone audiences. On Ridge's relation to his subject matter in *Joaquin Murieta*, Hobsbawm writes: "It is perhaps no accident that the creator of the noble but also notably cruel band of Joaquin Murieta, avenger of the Californian Mexicans, was himself a Cherokee Indian, that is to say a member of an even more hopelessly dominated minority group" (64).

<sup>54</sup> See Nadeau, *The Real Joaquin Murieta*, 115-127.

<sup>55</sup> See Merish, "Print, Cultural Memory, and John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*," for analysis of Ridge and his uncle, Elias Boudinot, in terms of print technologies and the articulation of Cherokee history/nationhood. For analysis of Cherokee intellectualism and literary production in the early nineteenth-century, see Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*.

<sup>56</sup> Rinaldo Rinaldini was a legendary Italian thief who allegedly led an uprising of bandits against French rule in Corsica in the early 1770s. Although there was a historical Rinaldini, the image of him that is reproduced and circulated through literature and mass media is a highly fictionalized and sentimentalized characterization first introduced by the German writer, Christian August Vulpius, in his 1799 book, *Rinaldo Rinaldini, the Robber Captain*. Rinaldini's story, as framed by Vulpius, was appropriated and repackaged as a stage drama by the American writer, William Dunlop, in his 1810 production, *Rinaldo Rinaldini, or, The great banditti: a tragedy, in five acts*.



<sup>57</sup> See John Carlos Rowe, “Highway Robbery: ‘Indian Removal,’ the Mexican-American War, and American Identity in The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta,” in *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, for analysis of Ridge’s Murieta as an model American success story gone awry.

<sup>58</sup> In English, the simplest way to identify the song is “the Murieta corrido.” I frequently use this phrase throughout the dissertation. In Spanish, “El corrido de Murieta” or “El corrido de Joaquín Murieta” is the simplest way to express the name of the song. I use this phrasing when I feel the syntax and context of the statement calls for it. Strangely, the song is frequently identified on compilations of corridos only as “Joaquín Murieta,” even when every other song on the disc is titled, “Corrido de \_\_\_\_.”

<sup>59</sup> Limón stresses the significance of first-person narration because “this self-centered poetics also characterizes” Gonzales’s poem, *I Am Joaquín* (118). Limón uses this observation of the corrido’s anomalous subjectivity to claim that the song is not a “true corrido.” The debate over the whether the Murieta corrido is actually a genuine corrido had raged for decades, until Luis Leal’s research in the 1990s definitively proved the song’s authenticity within the corrido tradition. See Leal, “‘El Corrido de Joaquín Murieta’: Origen y difusión.” Leal’s study was adapted and amalgamated into the “Introduction” of Arte Publico Press’s 1999 reproduction of Ireneo Paz’s 1904 novel.

<sup>60</sup> The term “americano” in line 5 can be translated either as “American” or as “Anglo,” depending on the preference of the translator. Capitalization depends upon the translator as well. I prefer to capitalize “Americano” in line 5 and translate it as “American” because it provides circularity to the first verse—that the first couplet and the final couplet revolve around the same term with the same sound.

<sup>61</sup> Citations of the lyrics of the Murieta corrido refer to line numbers. The text of the lyrics cited in this dissertation comes primarily from Luis Leal’s “El Corrido de Joaquín Murieta” and Introduction to Paz. Although I consider alternative translations of the lyrics that have been published in CD liner notes and various online resources, I defer to Leal’s work as the default translation when in doubt.

<sup>62</sup> Unlike the Ridge novel, in which Murieta’s spouse is raped but not killed, the corrido insists upon her death. This aspect of the corrido seems to be directly shaped by the 1859 *California Police Gazette* plagiarism of Ridge’s novel. The *Police Gazette*’s appropriations and alterations of Ridge’s text are central to my analysis in the fourth chapter of this project.

<sup>63</sup> For criticism on Ridge’s novel in regards to issues of class warfare and wealth redistribution (tropes common to Robin Hood narratives), see Peter Christensen, “Minority Interaction in John Rollin Ridge’s *The Life of Joaquín Murieta*.”; and Joe Goeke, “Yellow Bird and the Bandit: Minority Authorship, Class, and Audience in John Rollin Ridge’s the Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta.”

<sup>64</sup> Such prejudice was surely palpable for corridista Luis Mendez as well, when he recorded his 1995 (post-NAFTA) version of the Murrieta corrido (using the Madrugadores lyrics).

<sup>65</sup> There is an inherent gender imbalance in that Mexican-American women are gendered male when absorbed within Joaquin's amalgamated subjectivity. See Candelaria.

<sup>66</sup> I describe Joaquin as an "old body" here partially in response to Gonzales's phrase, "my / age / old / burdened back" (*Message* 23). Also because the "Head of Murrieta" was first exhibited 114 years before Gonzales published his piece. However, as noted elsewhere throughout this chapter, Joaquin is usually a young man. In all Murrieta narratives except the corrido and the Gonzales poem, Joaquin dies young.

<sup>67</sup> This insistence on separatism strikes a parallel between Gonzales's poem and the teleologies of Native American literary nationalism, as discussed in Chapter One. As with the Native nationalist criticism, Gonzales's brand of separatism is ultimately unsustainable in relation to the cultural infusions that characterize the Murrieta archive.

<sup>68</sup> Americo Paredes coins the term "greater Mexico" in his foundational corrido scholarship; see *With a Pistol in His Hand*. In *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems*, José Limón employs the term "greater Mexico" to describe the dynamics between the corrido and the Gonzales poem.. The term speaks to the Mexican diaspora and the transporter influence of Mexican culture.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce-Novoa writes, "*I Am Joaquin* set a moral tone that became part and parcel of the Movement: a moral superiority of Chicanos over Anglo Americans that can be traced back to Catholicism" and the notion that Catholic inclusiveness leveled the imbalance power dynamics of racialized colonialism (*Chicano Poetry* 54).

<sup>70</sup> Limón writes, "Finally we were writing our own corridos, and Gonzales and the Chicano youth community were both heroes and corridistas" (123). This idea speaks to my claim that unlike John Henry, who never sings his own song, the Murrieta corrido enables Joaquin to become himself, to tell his story by singing his own song. By identifying Gonzales and Chicano youth as "*both* heroes and corridistas" (emphasis added), Limón shows how the anomalous persona of Joaquin Murrieta fuses the corridista with the heroic subject.

<sup>71</sup> The final two lines of *I Am Joaquin* demonstrate the poem's bilingual dualism. Whereas in the verbs "will" and "shall" are different in English, they are the same term in Spanish. The final two lines of *Yo Soy Joaquin* are: "¡Perduraré! ¡Perduraré!"

<sup>72</sup> A biographical analysis of Gonzales's childhood, when he was raised without a mother in extremely poverty, could account for the overabundance of mythologized female characters. However, Gonzales's personal struggles notwithstanding, the poem clearly purveys a male-centric paradigm wherein women are continuously objectified and hyper-mythologized. This

irony is particularly evident in the fact that Gonzales's Joaquin aims to "fight / And win this struggle / for my sons" (*Message* 28), when Gonzales and his spouse actually raised six daughters and two sons.

<sup>73</sup> For female-centered/feminist readings on images of women in Chicano/a literature and cultural production, see Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; Maria Herrera-Sobek, *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis*; Sonia Saldivar-Hull, *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*.

<sup>74</sup> See *The Other Gospels*, ed. by Ron Cameron, 55-64.

<sup>75</sup> See Erwin Gudde, *California Place Names*, 211, 286-287. Gabriel Moraga's father was named Jose Joaquin Moraga, and his son was named Joaquin Moraga. See also "The Gabriel Moraga Expedition of 1806: The Diary of Fray Pedro Muñoz."

<sup>76</sup> Luis Leal, Richard Rodriguez, and Robert McKee Irwin suggest that Three-Fingered Jack's last name was Duarte rather than Garcia. There is no conclusive evidence either way. Because Ridge, the *California Police Gazette*, and Ireneo Paz all use the name Garcia, I am also using Garcia in this dissertation to avoid confusion in regards to the primary texts of my study.

<sup>77</sup> The names of these American soldiers were Cowie and Fletcher. Ridge identifies them by name, as do many other novelists and historians to engage the Murrieta narrative.

<sup>78</sup> I use the proper spelling, "Cantua," throughout this study. Ridge, however, spells the term "Cantoova" in the Ridge text, one of many instances where Ridge Anglicizes the spelling of Spanish names. The *California Police Gazette* also spells it "Cantoova," but most publications to follow Bancroft spell it "Cantua."

<sup>79</sup> A few scholars have addressed the issue of Joaquin's impossible liberation philosophy: Cheryl Walker, John Carlos Rowe, and Jesse Alemán. However, these analyses do not focus on Joaquin's subjectivity. In a provocative reading, Alemán contends that the practice and internalization of American political theory predetermined the ultimate futility of both the Cherokee resistance to Removal and Murrieta's rebellion against Anglo California.

<sup>80</sup> See Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out*. Although Pfaelzer's research demonstrates the effect that Murrieta's rebellion had upon the safety and the overall mentality of the Chinese community in California during the early 1850s, she inaccurately attributes Three-Fingered Jack's declaration that he "loved to smell the blood of a Chinamen" to Joaquin himself (46). This sort of reattribution of Ridge's lines is common in the Murrieta archive.

<sup>81</sup> According to historians Remi Nadeau and Bruce Thornton, Joaquin Murrieta's banditti began to target other Mexicans and Latinos in 1853, including impoverished people as well

as wealthy Californios. For many scholars, this fact debunks the myth that Joaquin was a veritable “Robin Hood” figure. Ridge either chooses to omit these details from his novel, or (due to a lack of journalistic reportage concerning crimes against Spanish-speakers) he was simply unaware of them while writing the book.

<sup>82</sup> To simplify, parenthetical citations referring to the *California Police Gazette* will use the initials *CPG*.

<sup>83</sup> Raymund Wood’s introduction to the 1969 republication of the *California Police Gazette* argues for the *CPG* as “a first-class tale, founded on historical fact” (xii). Wood takes aim at Joseph Henry Jackson’s introduction to the 1955 republication of the Ridge novel, insisting that information uncovered after Jackson’s death in 1955 reveals the actual truth of Ridge’s almost entirely fictional narrative. As is usually the case in the Murrieta archive, Wood’s “new evidence” was circumstantial, taken largely from documents that had merely embellished Ridge’s story, and it actually proved nothing other than the fact that Ridge’s novel is the ultimate source of the narrative.

<sup>84</sup> Ridge’s Joaquin often chastises his subordinates for not acting with enough honor or nobility. However, these reprimands never take the form of derisive ridicule. See the Reis incident with Rosalie (Ridge 97-109).

<sup>85</sup> *Joaquin the Terrible* was the title of one of one Joseph E. Badger’s three novels about Murrieta to be published in the Beadle’s Dime Library during the early 1880s.

<sup>86</sup> Naturally, Burns has no sources or concrete evidence to support this high estimate.

<sup>87</sup> The primary scene here referenced is the one where Joaquin approaches a wanted sign in Stockton advertising a \$5,000 reward for his capture and writes a message upon the sign itself: “I will give \$10,000—Joaquin.” This episode was actually introduced into the popular consciousness *before* the Ridge novel saw print. As such, it is one of the few generally acknowledged “facts” of the mysterious and otherwise poorly documented life of the largely fictional Joaquin Murrieta. The fact that Ridge made this episode so central to his narrative, as well as the fact that it is included in *every* retelling of the story post-Ridge, testifies to the enduring popularity of this episode.

<sup>88</sup> A *New York Times* review from 1936 describes J. Carrol Naish’s performance as Jack as “excellent” (Nugent). Likewise, a recent analysis of the film in *Time Out London* describes Naish’s performance as the only “exception” to a film otherwise marked by “poor performances” (“*Time Out* Film Guide”). Even Remi Nadeau and Bruce Thornton, who resent the film’s anti-factual romanticization of the Murrieta mythos, applaud Naish’s performance.

<sup>89</sup> This moment marks a significant contrast to the Burns novel. Burns's Joaquin never equates himself with Chinese people: "Murrieta ... held Chinamen as little better than livestock and made no bones about popping them off whenever a little judicious slaughter helped him steal their gold" (Burns 56).

<sup>90</sup> This scene must have influenced Pablo Neruda's vision of Murrieta, particularly the "Galopa Murrieta" moments in Scene Five of *Fulgor y Muerte*.

<sup>91</sup> Mayoral and Rosa, "De la génesis de una etnia a la formación de una nacionalidad (Las verdaderas leyendas de Joaquin Murrieta)." The term "La Raza" refers to Latin Americans, regardless of nationality, as a unified race.

<sup>92</sup> By "Mexican soil," I am referring to the political boundaries of Mexico post-U.S.-Mexican War. The corrido and *I Am Joaquin* both insist that California properly belongs to Mexico.

<sup>93</sup> Mountain Jim appears in the Ridge version, but Ridge does not describe a fight between him and Three-Fingered Jack. This scene in the *Police Gazette* is yet another example of a CPG alteration that emphasizes the unruliness and uncontrollability of Jack's violence and, by extension, Joaquin's. It also emphasizes the notion of a mutually intractable racial divide between Anglos and Mexicans.

<sup>94</sup> Carrillo first founded a press in San Francisco in 1897, but it was destroyed during the earthquake and fire of 1906. Carrillo also lost his only daughter during the disaster. See Leal, "Adolfo Carrillo," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 122: Chicano Writers*.

<sup>95</sup> See Irwin 77.

<sup>96</sup> Although nearly all Latino writers use the double "rr" to spell "Murrieta," Neruda follows the single "r" spelling used in Roberto Hyenne's 1862 plagiarism that transformed Joaquin into a Chilean. Acevedo Hernandez also uses the single "r" spelling.

<sup>97</sup> The textual production of Pablo Neruda's "insurrectionary cantata," *Fulgor y Muerte de Joaquin Murieta (Splendor and Death of Joaquin Murieta)*, follows a remarkably similar chronology to Gonzales's *I Am Joaquin*. Gonzales's poem was first penned in 1966, first published in 1967, and widely distributed within Chicano communities in the years that followed. Neruda's play was first published in Santiago in 1966, first performed on stage in 1967 at the Instituto de Teatro of the Universidad de Chile in Santiago, where it was hugely popular and ran for several months. In the late-1960s and early 1970s, *Fulgor y Muerte* was performed on stages throughout Latin America, including a well-received run in Mexico City.

<sup>98</sup> Aztlán is the mythical Chicano homeland, which includes the present-day Southwest United States as well as Mexico.

<sup>99</sup> The pages have no page numbers in Neruda's "Author's Foreword," his "Author's Note," and Belitt's "Translator's Foreword." That is why I have not indicated page numbers here. To simplify, all direct quotations from *Fulgor y Muerte* in this dissertation are taken from Belitt's translation.

<sup>100</sup> Regarding Joaquin's nationality, see Leal, Introduction lxxii; and Manuel Rojas 78.

<sup>101</sup> In Neruda's drama, "Teresa" is the name of Joaquin Murrieta's spouse. Neruda's play is the only text in the Murrieta archive to identify Joaquin's spouse with this name.

<sup>102</sup> The first newspaper article to address "Joaquin" by name is published in Los Angeles in November 1852.

<sup>103</sup> Neruda's source for the speech of this "Indian" is particularly ironic. Thornton reports: "This speech, by the way, is quoted by Neruda from Cossley-Batt's *Last of the California Rangers*, suggesting that its sentiments derive from American romanticism rather than Indian beliefs" (140).

<sup>104</sup> Neruda is the first writer in the Murrieta archive to consistently capitalize the word, "Head." Subsequent references to the capitalized "Head" in this dissertation directly reference Neruda's portrayal of the Head as an entity with a degree of dramatic agency.

<sup>105</sup> The killers, dubbed "the bloodhounds" by Neruda, burn crosses and are "hooded" with symbols associated with White Supremacism in the twentieth-century United States.

<sup>106</sup> Regarding the dynamics between the chorus and audience in *Fulgor y Muerte*, see Sergio Pereira Poza, "Dramaturgia y traducción escénica de *Fulgor y muerte de Joaquín Murieta* de Pablo Neruda."

<sup>107</sup> Irwin, a Spanish Professor at UC Davis, conducted thorough bilingual research on Murrieta. However, *Bandits, Captives, Heroines, and Saints* is published in English by the University of Minnesota Press, and its argument targets Anglophone scholars.

<sup>108</sup> See Linda Gould Levine, "Weaving Life into Fiction," in *Isabel Allende Today*. Allende credits Neruda with "marking her vision of the world" (10).

<sup>109</sup> Evelyn Wells published her work, *Joaquin Murieta! Story of California's notorious bandit of the early fifties*, in 1923. Prior to Allende, Wells's book was the only text composed by a woman to recount Murrieta's "life." Classified as a "biography," Wells's book is like most Murrieta narratives in that it rehashes the typical Ridge-based plot. In addition, Louise Clappe ("Dame Shirley") authored a letter in 1851 from the California mining camps that described the suffering of a young Mexican who swore vengeance upon his Anglo abusers. Although it does not mention "Joaquin" by name, the Clappe letter is considered one of the many

texts that influenced Ridge's construction of the hero in 1854 (see *The Shirley Letters* 150-151). Also significant is Cherrie Moraga's 1992 play, *Heroes and Saints*, which, although not directly about Joaquin Murrieta, speaks to the looming significance of his severed head in that its central character is a Chicana from California's Central Valley whose body has been eroded from pesticides. Though Moraga's play invokes the severed head and absent body of Murrieta, it is not a "Murrieta narrative" like Allende's *Daughter of Fortune*.

<sup>110</sup> For analysis of Ridge's novel attuned to questions of gender balance, see Tracey Jordan, "Joaquin Murieta, Cherokee Outlaw-Hero: Yellow Bird's Vindication of Cherokee Nature"; and Maria A. Windell, "Sanctify Our Suffering World with Tears: Transamerican Sentimentalism in *Joaquin Murieta*."

<sup>111</sup> Regarding Ridge's creation of Joaquin Murrieta from "whole cloth," see Joseph Henry Jackson and Remi Nadeau.

<sup>112</sup> In Allende's *Portrait in Sepia*, the sequel to *Daughter of Fortune*, Rose Sommers returns to England where she becomes a best-selling author of erotic literature. When considering the larger narrative arc of both books together, Eliza's liberation from prescriptive narratives of male-centric repression and containment acts as a catalyst for Rose to articulate her own identity and sexuality more explicitly through print narratives.

<sup>113</sup> Allende's assertion that Murrieta's original last name was Andieta cannot be disproven, just as Ridge's novel, in spite of its exuberant and fantastic details, cannot necessarily be disproven with empirical evidence. Ridge's rebuttal to critics who accused him of falsehoods in 1854—"Prove it!"—could also be applied to many aspects of Allende's novel, including Joaquin's original last name.

<sup>114</sup> The "five Joaquins" were: Murrieta, Valenzuela, Ocomorenia, Carrillo, and Botellier.

<sup>115</sup> When using the phrases "master plot" or "master narrative" in regards to the typical or mainstream Murrieta narrative from which Allende and her protagonist seek liberation, I do so with respect to Limón's identification of the Murrieta corrido as the "master poem" from which Gonzales's ahistorical persona seeks liberation.

<sup>116</sup> Allende's Joaquin is three years older than Ridge's.

<sup>117</sup> This pattern of "searching for Joaquin" reverberates throughout both the Murrieta archive itself and scholarship about the archive. A case in point is Bruce Thornton's monograph exploring the various patterns of manipulation and mythologized reinterpretations of Murrieta is titled, *Searching for Joaquin*.

<sup>118</sup> See Neruda, *Fulgor y Muerte*, Scene Two.

<sup>119</sup> Translated, Yanira Paz's point is that the bildungsroman from the perspective of Joaquin is incomplete when he departs Chile. In contrast, when Eliza departs from Valparaiso, her bildungsroman begins.

<sup>120</sup> It is ironic that Eliza finds freedom by appearing to be Chinese, for she would certainly be the target of racist gazes in Anglo California. However, as Tao's younger brother, neither the dominant Anglo culture nor the patriarchal Chinese culture expect much, if anything, from her. Her appearance enables her to be free from the web of expectations foisted upon a young woman.

<sup>121</sup> On "mimicry," see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 85-92.

<sup>122</sup> Allende's decision to link Eliza, a potentially abused woman, to the Chinese population is notable precisely because the Chinese have been the most abused cultural group in the typical Murrieta plot.

<sup>123</sup> See Rowe, "Highway Robbery," for analysis of Ridge's Joaquin as a potential exceptionalist immigrant.

<sup>124</sup> See Reutter, "Manifold Destinies," for analysis of American exceptionalism in *Daughter of Fortune*.

<sup>125</sup> Louis Owens writes: "with his thick black beard and urbane dress, Ridges passed easily as a Euramerican, and, more importantly, with his education and talents he was distinguishing himself amongst his 'white' peers and seeing his name appearing repeatedly in association with those of the leading literati of San Francisco. Ridge, like many mixedbloods who 'pass' and who have succeeded within the parameters of the dominant culture, must have felt the conflict deeply" (*Other Destinies* 38).

<sup>126</sup> Concerning discursive removal, see Lucy Maddox, *Removals*, and Timothy Powell, *Ruthless Democracy*.

<sup>127</sup> See Theresa Snyder, *Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exhibition*, regarding Santos Tornero's global contexts.

<sup>128</sup> See Dale and Litton, *Cherokee Cavaliers*.

<sup>129</sup> Translation: In this sense, Elias is the literary projection of this desire of Allende's.

<sup>130</sup> For analysis of Allende's novel in a trans-Pacific context of colonialism and subalternity, see Isaac G. Rivera-Campos, "The Orientalist Route in Isabel Allende's *Daughter of Fortune*."



<sup>131</sup> I write “momentarily” here because in *Portrait in Sepia*, the sequel to *Daughter*, Tao Chi'en pays for his abolitionist transgressions with his life.

<sup>132</sup> Joaquin is widely acknowledged as a primary influence upon the creation of Zorro. Robert and Katherine Morsberger note, Zorro “is part of the *bandido* tradition, most closely associated” with figures like the “mythical Joaquin Murrieta and the historical Tiburico Vazquez” (xxi).

<sup>133</sup> Curtis reads Murrieta as an aristocrat through her reading of Ridge's novel. However, the issue of Murrieta's class status is complex. Ridge contends that Joaquin was “born of respectable parents and educated in the schools of Mexico” (8). Perhaps it is implied that a Sonoran attending school must have been born into some kind of wealth, but nowhere does Ridge explicitly identify Joaquin as an aristocrat. Some post-Ridge Anglophone versions of the Murrieta narrative do render an aristocratic Joaquin, an alteration that was introduced to the archive by Charles E.B. Howe's 1858 drama, *Joaquin Murieta de Castillo*. The 1859 California Police Gazette plagiarizes the Ridge account but adds the modifier “good” when describing how suggests that Joaquin “received a good education” (CPG 1). The 1904 Ireneo Paz production claims that Joaquin's family were “highly respectable people of Sonora,” reflective of the Anglophone notion of Murrieta-as-aristocrat that takes root in Howe's play and evolves throughout the late-nineteenth century. In the Chicano and Chilean versions, however, Joaquin is clearly a campesino.

<sup>134</sup> The Spielberg-produced *The Legend of Zorro* suggests that the mask is powerful enough to cloak Don Diego from his own son, who is named Joaquin. This dynamic could be read, literally and archivally, as Joaquin's inability to recognize his own lineage because of the deceptive and transformative power of the mask. Of course, Zorro identifies himself not solely with his mask, but also by the letter “Z.” The letter has the capacity to unmask Zorro, as it does in the final scene of *The Mark of Zorro*, when Don Diego (Fairbanks) carves a “Z” onto the forehead of the villainous Capitán Ramón, causing all the caballeros in the scene to recognize that Diego is Zorro. In this way, the letter “Z” functions less as a verbal articulation than as an auxiliary kind of mask: Zorro's enemies “wear” the letter just as Zorro wears the mask. The trademark “Z” identifies the masked Zorro as its author.

<sup>135</sup> The similarities between Zorro and Batman are voluminous. Kane writes: “Zorro has a major influence on me on the creation of Batman in 1939. When I was thirteen years old, I saw *The Mark of Zorro* with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. He was the most swashbuckling, derring-do, super hero I've ever, ever seen in my life, and he left a lasting impression on me. And of course later, when I created the Batman, it gave me the dual identity, 'cause Zorro had the dual identity. During the day, he played a foppish count, Don Diego ... a bored playboy, and at night he became Zorro. He wore a mask and he strapped his trusty sword around his waist. He came out of a cave ... which I made into a bat cave, and he rode a black horse called Tornado, and later on I had the Batmobile. So Zorro was a major influence on my creation of Batman” (qtd. in Curtis 22). Kane also notes that both Zorro and Batman are



I placed on that fortress wall  
to wait for independence.” (*Message to Aztlán* 18-19)

<sup>140</sup> See Finger et al, “The Mark of a Hero.” *Batman* #58 [2]. April/May 1950.

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