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**THE RENEGADE HEROES: A DISCUSSION OF 19TH CENTURY POPULAR
WESTERN FICTION**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LITERATURE

by

Trevor M. Schack

June 2012

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Abstract
The Renegade Heroes: A Discussion of 19th Century Popular Western Fiction
By Trevor Schack

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the discursive connection of three of these novels. John Rollin Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854), Edward Wheeler's *Deadwood Dick, The Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills* (1877) and W.B. Lawson's *Dashing Diamond Dick; or, The Tigers of Tombstone* (1898) develop a genre that portrays a type of character I call the "Renegade Hero."

The first chapter of this study examines Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta* as a text that creates a set of thematic elements that will become integral to the construction of both *Deadwood Dick* and *Diamond Dick*. These discursive features include the renegade hero's "naming" of himself, and female characters whose gender is obscured because they dress in drag. I also argue that Ridge's authorship of *Joaquin Murieta* affects the novel in such a way that it can become a precursor text to *Deadwood Dick* and *Diamond Dick* because of the way that Ridge separates his text from the sensationalist novels that precede it.

In the second chapter, I build on my established discursive framework to analyze the development of thematic elements in *Deadwood Dick*. I discuss a scene from *Deadwood Dick* that seems to directly cite *Joaquin Murieta*; additionally, I compare the author of *Deadwood Dick*, Edward Wheeler, to John Rollin Ridge as another way to show that the discursive elements in *Deadwood Dick* do not seem to be an independent discovery based on Wheeler's life experience.

The final chapter is meant to demonstrate how *Diamond Dick* continues the development of the renegade hero. It focuses on the re-appropriation of the discursive elements from *Deadwood Dick* and how the dime novel fits into the renegade hero subgenre. This chapter also attempts to demonstrate how the thematic focus throughout the course of the novels shifts from the renegade hero's "naming" of himself, to the gender obscuration of a primary character in the novel.

This study is dedicated to my grandfather and my mother, my two biggest supporters.

Many thanks to:
Kirsten, for helping me find my voice;
Marsh, for your trust;
Susan, for your enthusiasm;
Kelsi, for “fascinatingly”
and
Rockstar San Diego.

Introduction

During the late 19th century in the United States there was a rise in popularity of short, plot-driven stories. Publishers like Street and Smith produced large quantities of dime novels and cheap fiction in an attempt to quench the appetite of those consumers who clamored for more adventure narratives. While the genres of these books and weeklies varied, stories about the American West were a cornerstone of the industry.

Much has been written about the “myth of the West” and the problematic translation of events in states like California to the pages of popular fiction. The accounts of gold prospectors, Indian raids and incredible shootouts offer us the opportunity to speculate on the tastes of those readers who created the demand that initiated new departments in publishing houses between 1850 and 1900. It also allows us to track and analyze the elements of the narratives that became integral parts of that discourse.¹

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the discursive connection of three of these novels. John Rollin Ridge’s *Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854), Edward Wheeler’s *Deadwood Dick, The Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills* (1877) and W.B. Lawson’s *Dashing Diamond Dick; or, The Tigers of Tombstone* (1898) develop a genre that portrays a type of character I call the “Renegade Hero.”

¹ Discourse, as described by Marshall Leicester in “What’s A Horror Movie?: Discourse and

Current scholars who work on *Joaquin Murieta* tend to focus on transnational appropriations of Murieta, how the novel should be viewed in the context of Ridge's Cherokee heritage, and the presentation of cultural memory. However, no one has pointed out that the novel can easily fit within the "outlaw novel" framework of analysis that is often used to denote a subgenre of Western dime novels.² Daryl Jones, in 1978, made the seminal observation that there was a period between 1877 and the turn of the 20th century when Western heroes were, for the first time, portrayed as outlaws. "Never before had a Western hero reacted against societal restraint as violently as to waylay stages and rob banks."³ Both Denning and Slotkin attempt to reify this position by providing historical context for these novels as well as an allegorical analysis of the outlaw heroes.⁴ Since then, much of the work done on these Western dime novels focuses on the novels' depictions of race and gender and

² Transnational appropriations: Windell A. Maria, "Sanctify Our Suffering World with Tears: Transamerican Sentimentalism in *Joaquin Murieta*" *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 63.2 (September 2008) 170-196 and Robert McKee Irwin, *Bandits, Captives, Heroines, and Saints: Cultural Icons of Mexico's Northwest Borderlands* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Cherokee heritage: John Carlos Rowe, "Highway Robbery: 'Indian Removal,' The Mexican-American War, and American Identity in the Life and Adventures of *Joaquin Murieta*" *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 31.2 (Spring 1998): 149-173 and Joe Goeke, "Yellow Bird and the Bandit: Minority Authorship, Class, and Audience in John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*" *Western American Literature* 37.4 (Winter 2003) 453-478; cultural memory: Lori Merish, "Print, Cultural Memory, and John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*, the Celebrated California Bandit" *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 59.4 (Winter 2003) 31-70 and Timothy B. Powell, "Historical Multiculturalism: Cultural Complexity in the First Native American Novel," *Beyond the Binary: Reconstructing Cultural Identity in a Multicultural Context*, ed. Timothy B. Powell (New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1999) 185-204.

³ Daryl Jones, *The Dime Novel Western* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1978) 81.

⁴ Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents* (London: Verso, 1987); Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

how the dime novel functions within its historical moment.⁵ There is no attempt, though, to redefine the limitations of the outlaw genre. I find this approach to the outlaw dime novel unsatisfactory because it implicitly limits the scope of comparison that can be done to earlier texts (namely, *Joaquin Murieta*).

My approach is indebted to this earlier work on late 19th-century dime novels, but goes beyond it to insist that Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta* is a pre-cursor to novels like Wheeler's *Deadwood Dick* and Lawson's *Diamond Dick*. In doing so, I borrow from Shelby Streeby's *American Sensations* (2002) on the development of early sensationalist novels and how they lead to Ridge's novel.⁶ I apply that analytical framework to *Joaquin Murieta*, *Deadwood Dick* and *Diamond Dick*.

I also borrow from Marshall Leicester's "What's A Horror Movie?: Discourse and Psychoanalysis" (2011) in an attempt to link the novels using a framework of discursive citation.⁷ My comparison of these different novels bridges the gap between the work being done on dime novels and the current studies of *Joaquin Murieta* by showing how some of the discursive elements that are being examined in these studies (namely, issues of gender and identity) function within a broader subgenre.

⁵ Race and gender: Nicole Tonkovich, "Guardian Angels and Missing Mothers: Race and Domesticity in Winona and Deadwood Dick on Deck" *Western American Literature* 32.3 (Fall 1997) 240-264 and Janet Dean, "From Sensational Dime Novel to Feminist Western: Adapting Genre and Transforming Gender" *Scorned Literature: Essays on the History and Criticism of Popular Mass-Produced Fiction in America* ed. Lydia Cushman Schurman and Deidre Johnson (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002) 37-50; Dime novel within its historical moment: Christine Bold, "The Voice of the Fiction Factory in Dime and Pulp Westerns" *Journal of American Studies* 17.1 (April 1983) 29-46 and John Springhall, "The Dime Novel as Scapegoat for Juvenile Crime: Anthony Comstock's Campaign to Suppress the 'Half-Dime' Western of the 1880s" *Dime Novel Roundup: A Magazine Devoted to the Collecting, Preservation and Study of Old-Time Dime and Nickel Novels* 63.4 (August 1994) 63-72.

⁶ Shelby Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁷ Marshall Leicester, "What's A Horror Movie?: Discourse and Psychoanalysis," LTMO 230 Reader (Santa Cruz: UC Santa Cruz, Spring 2011).

This essay also engages with some recent work done on performativity in the Western dime.⁸ While this work is not necessarily applicable to a reading of the discursive elements in *Joaquin Murieta*, they create useful frameworks for this paper.

The first chapter of this study examines Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta* as a text that creates a set of thematic elements that will become integral to the construction of both *Deadwood Dick* and *Diamond Dick*. These discursive features include the renegade hero's "naming" of himself, and female characters whose gender is obscured because they dress in drag. I also argue that Ridge's authorship of *Joaquin Murieta* affects the novel in such a way that it can become a precursor text to *Deadwood Dick* and *Diamond Dick* because of the way that Ridge separates his text from the sensationalist novels that precede it.

In the second chapter, I build on my established discursive framework to analyze the development of thematic elements in *Deadwood Dick*. I discuss a scene from *Deadwood Dick* that seems to directly cite *Joaquin Murieta*; additionally, I compare the author of *Deadwood Dick*, Edward Wheeler, to John Rollin Ridge as another way to show that the discursive elements in *Deadwood Dick* do not seem to be an independent discovery based on Wheeler's life experience.

The final chapter is meant to demonstrate how *Diamond Dick* continues the development of the renegade hero. It focuses on the re-appropriation of the discursive elements from *Deadwood Dick* and how the dime novel fits into the renegade hero

⁸ Jefferson D. Slagle, "The Heirs of Buffalo Bill: Performing Authenticity in the Dime Western" *Canadian Review of American Studies* 39.2 (2009) 119-138 and Daniel Worden, "Masculinity for the Million: Gender in Dime Novel Westerns" *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 63.3 (Autumn 2007) 35-60.

subgenre. This chapter also attempts to demonstrate how the thematic focus throughout the course of the novels shifts from the renegade hero's "naming" of himself, to the gender obscuration of a primary character in the novel.

I. The Birth of the Renegade

It might be a bit presumptuous to call *Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) the “birth” of the renegade hero. A “renegade hero” is a character who opposes the ruling class of a town or region. The character is often male, but not necessarily. The renegade hero’s mission is to uphold a set of moral principles that s/he values more than the laws of the region. These moral principles tend to differ from character to character, but they all seem to be a product of class division. That is to say, the renegade hero forsakes the written laws because they favor the wealthy. Instead, s/he attempts to re-appropriate misbegotten wealth.

This definition also describes another character. In the introduction to John Rollin Ridge’s novel, *Joaquin Murieta*, Joseph Henry Jackson notes that the text is “built... to the traditional Robin Hood blueprint.”⁹ This description implies that *Murieta* and Robin Hood function similarly because Ridge purposefully re-appropriates elements of the popular, British story into his own text. The similarities between the two outlaws are striking, and, at a glance, it seems like the only difference between the Robin Hood-type character and the renegade hero is that the renegade hero necessarily operates in a gold-mining region of the United States.

While this is not the case (as will be shown later), it is important to note that this essay does not deny the influence of a story like Robin Hood on Ridge’s novel. This essay will contend that *Joaquin Murieta*, like the story of Robin Hood, exerts a

⁹ Joseph Henry Jackson, introduction, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated Bandit Hero*, by John Rollin Ridge (Norman: University of Oklahoma City Press, 1955) xxvii.

sort of pressure on its genre. This results in a number of scenes and thematic elements from the novel being re-appropriated and re-fashioned in later texts. This piece will focus on how Ridge positions certain discursive elements that help to create a discourse that includes components of the Western-outlaw subgenre before it exists.¹⁰ *Joaquin Murieta* is a novel that contributes to the creation of a discourse that includes texts from the dime Western era.

John Rollin Ridge, an Uncommon Sensationalist Writer

John Rollin Ridge creates the “renegade hero” in *Joaquin Murieta*. Deadwood Dick, Thomas K. Cat and Diamond Dick are all literary descendants of Ridge’s protagonist. Later in this essay, I will address the ways that characters, scenes and narrative themes from *Joaquin Murieta* lay the groundwork for the portrayal of other renegade heroes, but first I will discuss how and why Ridge’s novel, while working within the sensationalist text-genre, was able to spawn a splinter-genre.

Ridge was born in New Echota, Georgia in 1827. He was a member of a politically active Cherokee family during the nascent phases of the United States government’s attempt to remove Cherokees from their homes. Ridge grew up listening to political rhetoric that challenged land usurpation and racial discrimination because, as James Parins (Ridge’s biographer) notes, “his parents’ and grandparents’ homes were important centers of resistance to the whites’ demands.”¹¹ Ridge’s family

¹⁰ “Western-outlaw subgenre” refers to the description of dime Westerns done by Daryl Jones in *The Dime Novel Western*.

¹¹ James Parins, *John Rollin Ridge: His Life and Works* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) 14.

saw the uncertainty of their future, and decided to relocate before they were forced to leave.¹²

Subsequently, the Cherokees who chose to remain in Georgia were violently removed. Unlike Ridge and his family, many of the Cherokees who were part of this expulsion would not live to see their new homes. As Parins notes, about “four thousand Cherokees died, a fifth of the nation.”¹³

Unfortunately for Ridge, his family’s struggle against the United States government was not the only battle they would have to fight. Many Cherokees blamed Ridge’s father and grandfather for the deaths of numerous tribal members because of their involvement in discussions with the federal government. In June of 1839, a group of men, led by members of the Ross family (a rival faction), attempted to shoot Ridge’s father in his bed, but due to a misfiring pistol, they had to stab him to death.¹⁴

There are at least two analytical frameworks that can be used to view *Joaquin Murieta* as an allegorical representation of Ridge’s life.¹⁵ One of these viewpoints contends that Ridge’s novel represents the community struggle within the Cherokee nation. Streeby explains this position, noting how “Ridge translates the battle between the Ross and the Ridge factions of the Cherokee nation into the conflict between Mexicans and “Americans” in the Murrieta story.”¹⁶

¹² Parins 23.

¹³ Parins 28.

¹⁴ Parins 29.

¹⁵ Shelby Streeby details these perspectives without citation, referring to their proponents as “critics”: Streeby 264-265.

¹⁶ Streeby 264.

Another allegorical reading of the novel argues that the Mexicans' treatment (by Californians and the United States government) could be seen as a way for Ridge to depict the governmental abuses of the indigenous peoples living in Georgia. The factions in this reading are divided by race and "land ownership" instead of being separated by intra-community relations.¹⁷

These allegorical readings of *Joaquin Murieta* suggest that there is an aspect of complexity to Ridge's novel that separates it from the other Western adventure novels written during the same period. There is a level of nuance to the different thematic elements in the text that can be seen as reflecting some of the trials that Ridge encounters throughout his life.

Ridge's publisher understood the untypical quality of Ridge's text. The "Publisher's Preface" notes that Ridge was raised:

From the age of seventeen up to twenty-three, with the tragical events which occurred so frequently in his own country, the rising of factions, the stormy controversies with the whites, the fall of distinguished chiefs, family feuds, individuals retaliation and revenge, and all the consequences of that terrible civil commotion which followed the removal of the Cherokee Nation from the east to the west of the Mississippi, under the administration of Gen. Jackson.¹⁸

This vague description of Ridge's upbringing depicts the way that Ridge's publisher wanted the public to view him. Ridge's novel supposedly results from his troubled childhood.

¹⁷ In terms of settlers claiming land versus the indigenous peoples' inhabitation of the land.

¹⁸ Publisher's preface, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated Bandit Hero*, by John Rollin Ridge (Norman: University of Oklahoma City Press, 1955) 2.

The uniqueness of Ridge's text can also be seen as a product of his being a Western-adventure author who writes about his own region.¹⁹ Ridge lived in California for a number of years prior to writing the book. The most obvious example of this influence is the fact that Ridge chose to write *Murieta's* story. Living in California during the 1850s, Ridge was exposed to numerous descriptions of the deeds of Murrieta (the common spelling used to refer to the man). Streeby explains that, "in January of 1853, California newspapers such as the *San Francisco Herald*, the *Calaveras Chronicle*, the *San Joaquin Republican*, and the *Sacramento Union* started carrying lurid articles about the crimes of a gang of "Mexican marauders" led by a Mexican named Joaquin."²⁰ Ridge's novel appeared a year later, and we can safely assume that his choice of subject matter was influenced by the representations of Murrieta that he had read in the newspaper.

Ridge wrote popular fiction about the American West for an audience that lived there. This is important because there are moments in the text when we are given a glimpse of what might be called "local language." Local language, in this context, refers to language that assumes the reader will have a specific knowledge before they read the text. This knowledge imbues certain passages with meanings that are defined by a connotation or an "inside understanding."

An example of this in *Joaquin Murieta* is Ridge's description of the slough between Stockton and San Francisco. Murieta waits to ambush a gold-laden schooner

¹⁹ As opposed to a writer like George Lippard who wrote about Mexico and the West while living in the Northeastern United States.

²⁰ Streeby 261.

“for three hours in those *tules*, which are a perfect ‘mosquito kingdom’ where huge gallinippers reign as the aristocracy.”²¹ This description implies an intimate knowledge of the San Joaquin River area. Ridge notes that the rampant mosquito population is supported by the conditions of the slough. He also mentions that Murieta hides behind a group of “tules,” but does not explain what they are. Tule is a grass-like herb that is native to the marshlands of California.²² These details are not the focus of the passage, but they add an element of realism to the scene because of the way that they are seamlessly integrated into the description. For those readers who know about the marshes that are south of San Joaquin County, and who use tule reeds to make boats and flour, Ridge’s text paints a vivid picture of Murieta’s world.

The re-appropriation of Ridge’s novel by other authors and publishers also points to *Joaquin Murieta* as something different than a formulaic, sensationalist novel. Because of the relaxed copyright laws during the mid-19th century, Ridge’s novel was re-written as a newspaper serial fairly soon after Ridge’s own version of the story was published. This was followed by numerous other versions of the story, and none of those authors gave any credit (or royalties) to Ridge. The interesting thing about the rewriting of *Joaquin Murieta* by other authors is not that Ridge was infuriated by it (which he was), but *why* he was infuriated by it. Ridge’s dislike of those later texts seemed to stem from the way that they misused his characters and

²¹ John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated Bandit Hero*, by John Rollin Ridge (Norman: University of Oklahoma City Press, 1955) 69.

²² Tule: A Multipurpose Plant of the California Indians, ed. Chuck Smith, Cabrillo College, California, 14 April 2012 <<http://www.cabrillo.edu/~crsmith/tule.html>> and Tule (*Schoenoplectus californicus*), ed. Dirk Walters, California Native Plant Society, 14 April 2012 <<http://cnpslo.org/2011/05/tule-schoenoplectus-californicus/>>.

scenes. The *California Police Gazette* version of Joaquin Murrieta's story (published in 1859) presents the narrative in a framework that adheres much more closely to the literature of sensation that was very popular during its publication. Streeby describes "the *California Police Gazette*'s story [as being] gorier and even more sensational than Ridge's, lingering over dripping blood, severed heads, and other body parts."²³

Even with the overt plagiarism of Ridge's novel, the *California Police Gazette* serial is still quite separate from its source. Streeby contends that the reason for this is that "being recognized as an author was... important to Ridge."²⁴ Ridge might have been mad about the theft of his intellectual property, but he might have also been angry about the way that the *California Police Gazette* portrays Murieta through the melodramatic, sensationalist-fiction lens. For instance, the *California Police Gazette* depicts a scene in which Murieta is unhappy because one of his men attempts to leave his company. He comes upon a camp of five Chinese men and, even though they do not defend themselves, he allows Jack to draw "his highly prized knife" and "[split] their skulls, and [sever] their neck joints."²⁵ The descriptions of murder in Ridge's novel never reach this gruesome level, and Ridge's Murieta never murders men with such little concern.

Ridge tried to surpass his fellow writers of popular fiction by adding elements to his story that moved the novel away from the discourse of sensationalist fiction. Streeby uses Ridge's own words to argue that his text "transcends wild romance and

²³ Streeby 263.

²⁴ Streeby 263.

²⁵ *The Life of Joaquin Murieta the Brigand Chief of California*, (Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1969) 46.

cheap sensationalism, [and that] it is not meant to imbue ‘enthusiastic spirits’ with the same sentiments, and his purpose is not to minister to ‘any depraved taste for the dark and horrible in human action.’”²⁶

The Problem with the Mining Community

A discussion of the thematic nuances of Ridge’s novel follows. These descriptions will attempt to show how Ridge’s text initiates a series of discursive elements that are eventually re-appropriated. This kind of re-appropriation connects *Joaquin Murieta* to later works of fiction through a sort of micro-discourse (or subgenre) that I will call “the renegade hero discourse.”

One thematic issue that separates Ridge’s *Joaquin Murrieta* from other versions of the text is the way that Murieta’s relationship to other Mexicans is developed. Streeby notes how “internal hierarchies stratify the category ‘Mexican’ for Ridge.”²⁷ This is demonstrated by the suggestion in the preface of the novel that “Murrieta is an ‘exception’ to the judgment that Mexicans are a people ‘who have so far degenerated as to have been called by many ‘A Nation of Cowards.’”²⁸ The establishment of a hierarchical divide between the main character (in terms of nobility or morality) and the other people with whom he associates is an important element of the text. Because “Murieta seems more like Ridge’s example of a special type of Mexican who would be capable, in the absence of racism, of assimilating to

²⁶ Streeby 263.

²⁷ Streeby 265.

²⁸ Editor’s preface, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated Bandit Hero*, by John Rollin Ridge (Norman: University of Oklahoma City Press, 1955) 4.

American “civilization” than the representative of Mexicans as a conquered and outraged people,” he can perform criminal deeds and still be perceived in a manner that places him above other outlaws who are simply ‘bad.’²⁹ In other words, Ridge constructs a Murieta who can create his own framework of justice. No matter how problematic his ideals may seem, he is still perceived as a product of the circumstances that made him into a renegade.

The types of crimes that Murieta commits (namely, murder and robbery) are not necessarily characteristic of the Western protagonist (at this time). I call Murieta the protagonist of the novel because, until the end, when Ridge feigns support for Harry Love, Murieta is a sympathetic character whose actions are condoned by the text.³⁰ This portrayal might be hard to reconcile if we do not take into account the types of places Murieta is visiting and the types of people that he is meeting. In other words, the California mining community, as portrayed by Ridge, is not necessarily a bastion of “U.S. values.” Murieta’s story begins by depicting his attempt to take part in the California gold rush. He stakes a claim and “had the confidence and respect of the whole mining community around him, and [he] was fast amassing a fortune from his rich mining claim.”³¹ Unfortunately for Murieta, the narrator’s characterization is not entirely accurate. The mining community does not fully accept his presence because of “the lawless and desperate men, who bore the name of Americans but

²⁹ Streeby 265.

³⁰ By this, I mean that there are very few moments in the text when the narrator describes Murieta’s misdeeds judgmentally.

³¹ Ridge 9.

failed to support the honor and dignity of the title.”³² These people “peremptorily bade him leave his claim, as they would allow no Mexicans to work in that region.”³³ How can a community embrace Murieta when there is a large contingent that tells him to leave? Murieta cannot take any action against these men because they hold more power within the community, so he is forced to depart.

Streeby contends that, in portraying Murrieta’s movement through the different mining communities, “Ridge is championing the law and U.S. ideals, but is [also] claiming that ‘prejudice of color’ may lead to *‘injustice to individuals.’*”³⁴ This is a good description of the reason that Murieta is forced to leave his first mining claim. It is not the laws that prohibit Murieta’s attempts to mine for gold, but the people who choose to habitually enforce segregation. These people “struck him violently over the face...” and “tied him hand and foot and ravished his mistress before his eyes.”³⁵ There are no laws in place that allow this mistreatment, and there is no legal recourse that Murieta can take because of the community’s problematic construction. In other words, it is the people (and not the state) that are at fault for creating Murieta-the-renegade. Murieta appeals to a certain kind of vigilante-righteousness because the framework of justice that exists in California during this period does not reflect the proper way of administering U.S. laws. As Streeby puts it, it is “the abrogation of law which in turn engenders crimes such as Murrieta’s.”³⁶

³² Ridge 9.

³³ Ridge 10.

³⁴ Streeby 266.

³⁵ Ridge 10.

³⁶ Streeby 266.

We might describe Murieta as being self-righteous by necessity. Murieta's reason for becoming a renegade hero seems to be a matter of revenge. After Murieta leaves his first mining claim, he moves to "Murphy's Diggings" (a mining town in Calaveras County, a region that Murieta frequents once he becomes an outlaw) and attempts to start a new business. Murieta is quickly accosted when he leads his brother's horse (who is recognized as being "stolen" by the locals) into town. He "suddenly found himself surrounded by a furious mob and charged with the crime of theft."³⁷ Instead of performing a proper trial, "they listened to no explanation, but bound him to a tree, and publicly disgraced him with a lash."³⁸ The lack of judicial procedure common to the mining towns where Murieta settles would become even more evident when the men who attack him "proceeded to the house of his half-brother and hung him without judge or jury."³⁹ After realizing that his torturers will receive no punishment for their actions, he takes it upon himself to judge them. "Whenever any one of them strayed out of sight of his camp or ventured to travel on the highway, he was shot down suddenly and mysteriously."⁴⁰ The implication is that Murieta begins his life as an outlaw by hunting down and assassinating each person who is involved in the unlawful murder of his half-brother.

Murieta is forced to continually leave his home because the circumstances of his life have changed. He can no longer take part in a community that ignores the judicial process and operates based on the desire of those people in power. In

³⁷ Ridge 12.

³⁸ Ridge 12.

³⁹ Ridge 12.

⁴⁰ Ridge 13.

removing himself, he does not necessarily take on the role of an avenger, but what we might call a re-framer. In other words, Murieta is not trying to change the people who he meets (if he were, it would probably result in a much more brutal killing spree), but he tries to change the system (by enforcing his own moral values) that guides their actions.

As a discursive element, Murieta's motivation for violence can be defined as a matter of conflicting values. Murieta is thrust into a setting where the people support ideals that clash with his own. Members of the mining community form groups like the "Vigilance Committee" of Marysville to extort information from innocent Mexican miners and torture suspected outlaws. These people observe a local "Sonoran Camp, [which was] occupied exclusively by Mexicans, many of whom had no ostensible employment, and yet rode fine horses and spent money freely."⁴¹ The "Vigilance Committee" uses a "partial confession" from a Mexican thief that they "run up with a rope several times to the limb of a tree" as a justification to attack the camp.⁴²

Although it is not clear whether or not Murieta is present at this camp, his perspective seems to be clear. This camp is a necessity for Mexicans who live in the area. They are not able to peacefully mine without being attacked or removed, so the creation of a camp where he (and other outlaws) can re-appropriate the wealth that they take from the mining community is the only way that the Mexicans in the area can receive any share of the mining profits. This camp displays the way that Murieta

⁴¹ Ridge 22.

⁴² Ridge 22.

chooses to insert himself into a city like Marysville. He believes that Mexicans should be able to take part in the mining community without being subject to unauthorized violence by the people who hold power. He works against the community by stealing their mining profits and performing acts of violence against those who oppose him.

As a renegade hero, Murieta cannot function in a community that does not respect the principles with which he lives his life. This causes him to enact punishment upon those “transgressors” who choose to work against him. Outside of Marysville, Sheriff R.B. Buchanan and a few deputies “were attacked from behind by three Mexicans who had been hid.”⁴³ The sheriff is shot and he swears that Murieta is the man who fired the gun. This violence is perpetrated against a person who upholds the system that abuses Mexican settlers. While this action might seem problematic on a larger scale (the injustice that Murieta faces would probably extend far past California), the renegade hero functions in this way because of his relationship to a specific setting.

The mining town (or region) helps to cause the renegade hero to take action because of the way that power is distributed within it. This is because mining towns (as depicted in this kind of fiction) are shoddily constructed (in terms of political power) and have poorly enforced laws. The most powerful citizens often govern these areas and they choose to exploit their power for profit. Murieta works against the unlawful racialization of Mexicans in the mining towns of California.

⁴³ Ridge 22.

While this description might not accurately reflect all histories of United States gold mining communities, Ridge portrays this behavior by the landowners in the gold-rich area of California by describing fictional accounts of the mistreatment of the men who live under the systems, but, and perhaps more importantly, Ridge also describes the effects of the real laws that were enacted during the peak of “gold fever” in California. These laws essentially prevented the “non-Californians” from mining the land. The Foreign Miner’s Tax of 1850 was a piece of legislation that forced all “foreigners” working in California goldmines to pay for a monthly permit.⁴⁴ This lawfully sanctioned racialization was enacted amid the tumultuous period following the Mexican-American War during which, “U.S. boundaries, laws, and institutions were strange, new, artificial, unevenly in place, violently enforced, and violently abrogated.”⁴⁵ In practice, this tax systematically disallowed Mexicans and Spanish-speaking Californians from taking part in many mining communities because of their social and political position.

The perception of this “white” greed, as it is presented by Ridge, is something that continually motivates Murieta’s actions. The memories of the wrongs that have been done to him are summed up when he says that he “hates [his] enemies, who are almost all of the Americans.”⁴⁶ The mining town creates Murieta. It is a problematic space that is unaffected by any power that does not exist within it, and it becomes an integral element of the renegade hero discourse.

⁴⁴ Streeby 269 (Quotation), and Minorities During the Gold Rush, California Secretary of State, 27 April 2012 < <http://www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=1933>>.

⁴⁵ Streeby 268.

⁴⁶ Ridge 50.

“Joaquin” the Renegade

The most substantial discursive element developed by *Joaquin Murieta* is the way that the renegade hero deals with his (or her) own identity. Murieta often disguises himself so that his enemies will not recognize him. He moves through towns and cities as an unknown figure until he takes off his mask and reveals himself. Murieta often proclaims his identity to the crowd and performs some sort of action that is characteristic of an outlaw (murder or robbery). A striking example of this behavior occurs when Murieta decides that the best way to attack one of his enemies (Capt. Wilson, the deputy sheriff of Santa Barbara County) is to first tell the man his name. After using a diversion to approach Wilson and “stooping over his saddle-bow, [Murieta] hissed in his ear, ‘I am Joaquin.’”⁴⁷ Murieta immediately kills the man and leaves the crime scene.

In committing acts of civil disobedience, Murieta engages in a type of performance. Slagle defines the role of performance for characters in a Western as an attempt to display “authenticity.”⁴⁸ He defines “authenticity” as “a measure of how well a western or westerner fits notions of what westerns and westerners should be, based on previous westerns and westerners that have been judged authentic.”⁴⁹ This description is reminiscent of Marshall Leicester’s definition of discourse, and it

⁴⁷ Ridge 46.

⁴⁸ Slagle uses this framework as an introduction to discussing the role of performance for dime Western characters after a series of Western plays appear in New York (starring William Cody) in 1871, but I have chosen to use it with *Joaquin Murieta* to demonstrate that this type of analysis is also applicable to Ridge’s novel due the discursive relationship between outlaw, dime Westerns and *Joaquin Murieta*: Slagle 119-138.

⁴⁹ Slagle 121.

implies that characters, like texts, can be viewed within a context that expands beyond their immediate circumstances.⁵⁰ This perspective requires that characters in Westerns are aware of this discourse of “authenticity,” and that, in their attempt to take part in it, they would necessarily be engaging in a performative action.

This means that Murieta’s performance is based on an awareness of the outlaws who have come before him. Ridge positions “Joaquin the Outlaw” as a product of what Murieta would understand as a collection of actions that other “authentic” outlaws had already performed.

Murieta uses “Joaquin” to portray the “authentic” bandit to the communities that he enters. For instance, when Joaquin kills Allan Ruddle for defending himself during a robbery, “Joaquin’s conscience smote him for this deed, and he regretted the necessity of killing so honest and hard-working a man as Ruddle seemed to be.”⁵¹ According to Ridge, there are no malicious intentions, high-minded rationalizations or lofty revenge goals involved in this action. Murieta seems to rob the man because his “character” necessitates it. Murieta’s need to re-appropriate wealth comes from a switch in his identity. This might leave little room for any “true” identity (if such a thing exists), but he concocts an ideal person that he would like to be seen as, and he makes sure to assert that character’s intentions whenever necessary. This is why Murieta can stand “very unconcernedly in a crowd, and [listen] to long and earnest conversations in relation to himself, and [laugh] in his sleeve at the many conjectures

⁵⁰ Leicester 47.

⁵¹ Ridge 33.

which [are] made as to his whereabouts and intentions.”⁵² Murieta is as much a bystander to the “myth of Joaquin” as he is a part of it. The renegade hero’s project is not to make himself into the enforcer of righteous, moral values, but it is to create a character whose identity makes the discussion of those values relevant.

The issue of naming, or revealing himself to other characters in the novel, is an important part of how Ridge characterizes Murieta. While some of the scenes where Murieta reveals himself seem oddly cavalier or arrogant, they serve to reinforce the “myth of Joaquin” that Murieta tries to propagate. But it is not egotism that drives Murieta’s actions. Murieta needs to enhance the mythic character he has created to the people who witness his actions and, perhaps more importantly, to himself. In other words, we should view Murieta as a fragmented character. He exists as a person who is constantly torn between the actions of the character that he is depicting, and the person who he believes himself to be. As an anonymous member of a crowd, Murieta can chuckle at the perceptions people have of the character he has created, but when he announces himself, to others or himself, he takes on the role of that character.

An interesting example of this type of scene occurs when a man appears from Murieta’s past. Murieta explains to Joe Lake that he has become “a deep-dyed scoundrel” who hates his “enemies, who are almost all of the Americans”⁵³ Murieta continues by saying that, because of their past connection, he loves Lake. He claims to understand why Lake cannot love or respect him, but Murieta implores the man to

⁵² Ridge 31.

⁵³ Ridge 50.

keep the secret of his identity. This is one of a few moments in the text where we can separate Murieta from the mythic figure that he has created. Murieta shares a tender moment with Joe Lake, but even within this context, he cannot help but to allow “Joaquin” to take over. Before their conversation ends, Murieta explains to Lake that he “would rather do anything in the world than kill [him], but if [Lake] betrays [him], [he] will certainly do it.”⁵⁴

This scene ends with Murieta murdering Lake for informing the local authorities of his whereabouts. Murieta, once again in public, sneaks up to Lake disguised as a white man “with a profusion of *red hair*,” and exclaims “I am Joaquin!” before killing him.⁵⁵ Murieta continues to develop his mythic persona while at the same time killing one of the few links to a part of his character that seems to be continually diminished throughout the novel.

This example depicts a number of thematic elements that recur throughout the development of the renegade hero. While the issue of the creation and portrayal of a character is integral to the construction of the renegade hero, the issue of masking and unmasking is another prevalent aspect of these texts. And while all of the issues discussed thus far in the essay have been in reference to the Murieta (as the first character to represent the renegade hero), the concept of how different characters hide or reveal their identities can also be applied to the small group of people who are intimately involved with Murieta and his actions.

⁵⁴ Ridge 50.

⁵⁵ Ridge 51.

Gender Ambiguity and the Outlaw Women

To say that the characters associated with Murieta must hide their identities when they accompany the bandit seems like an obvious observation. By taking part in Murieta's crimes, they are accessories to those crimes and can be charged (or worse, depending on who catches them). But an important feature of the women who sometimes accompany Murieta in his travels is that they not only disguise their identities, but they completely mask their gender. In a description of Murieta's normal routine for exiting a city, Ridge describes how "the women dressed in their male clothes" before starting the journey.⁵⁶ There are no explicit reasons given in the text to explain why these women customarily wore men's attire during their movements across the state, but there is a practical explanation for this choice. Murieta might seem more vulnerable to an attack with women traveling in his party. While this may not necessarily be true (especially considering the types of women who might be associating with Murieta), the expectation of this problem might have been enough for Murieta to ask the women to wear men's attire. This argument is not entirely convincing considering that, if his location was known, Murieta's enemies would probably not be deterred from attacking him regardless of the genders of his party members.

The decision for the women to dress in drag during these situations seems to parallel the relationship that Murieta has with his mythic persona. By wearing male clothing during their travels, the women, who are not portrayed as taking part in the

⁵⁶ Ridge 31.

crimes that Murieta commits, become integral members of the posse and cannot be differentiated (from an outsider's perspective) from any of the other party members. Cross-dressing, in this instance, is a way of allowing the women to blend into the party and create an aesthetic continuity among the group, but it also necessitates the portrayal of a "character" on the part of these women.

When in drag, the women hide themselves in the clothes of men, but they would need to go a bit further to seem convincing. In order to maintain coherency among the group, the women would have to take on the tendencies, the look, of the men who surround them. Passersby would see these women as additional members of the outlaw posse. They become bandits by extension, and take on whatever that role entails. Much like Murieta's "Joaquin," these women create an identity that is based on their understanding of the "authentic" outlaw, and the character necessitates a certain type of comportment on their part. This role, as defined by Murieta, is dependent on the portrayal of masculinity.⁵⁷

To reveal themselves the women put on their normative attire and fulfill their different roles that, while integral to the success of the party, inherently separate them from the men whom they accompany. This dynamism of gender places these women in a position that is very similar to the renegade hero. They cannot exist within any single community because, in their bandit garb, they cannot perform the normative role that would be expected of them within the different mining towns that they visit.

⁵⁷ Outlaw "authenticity" is defined in later instances of the renegade hero by Edward Harris/Deadwood Dick, Diamond Dick and Tornado Tom.

But when they dress as women, they place themselves in the same type of danger that ended the life of Murieta's wife.

II. The Renegade Rides Again

In order to discuss the renegade hero discourse and how it develops from *Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) to *Deadwood Dick, The Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills* (1877), we must first address some issues concerning the author of that novel, Edward L. Wheeler. We should begin by considering whether or not there is any evidence that Wheeler read Ridge's novel. There is little known about Wheeler's life, and his reading habits aren't recorded in detail. While this problem might appear to stifle any argument concerning specific references to scenes or thematic issues that are re-appropriated from Ridge's story, issues of discourse seem to supersede any necessity for a particular historical reference to whether or not an author read a particular text. As Leicester points out, elements of discourse are "drawn from all over, from literature, from movies, from newspapers and the folk imagination (legend, myth, folktale), from criticism as well as art."⁵⁸ In other words, the discourse that Ridge enters by writing *Joaquin Murieta* becomes a conversation that is applicable to *Deadwood Dick* because of the type of novels that Wheeler writes. He is aware of the discursive elements that are appropriated from *Joaquin Murieta* (nearly 25 years earlier) because he, as an author of Western, popular-fiction, enters into a discourse that was developed by Ridge's novel (whether he realizes it or not).

⁵⁸ Leicester is discussing modern media in this instance (the horror film), but this definition would still apply to writers of popular fiction during this period: Leicester 47.

Then, one might ask, what is special about the role *Deadwood Dick* plays in the development of the renegade hero genre? This chapter will focus on the way that Wheeler re-appropriates certain elements of Ridge's novel and places them into his own story.

Edward Wheeler, Sensationalist Novelist

In his introduction to *Deadwood Dick*, Bill Brown notes that, unlike Ridge, Wheeler embraced his role as an author of popular fiction. Wheeler's "unabashed letterhead – *Studio of Edward L. Wheeler, Sensationalist Novelist Philadelphia* – made it clear that he considered writing dime novels a perfectly reasonable profession."⁵⁹

Wheeler re-appropriates elements of *Joaquin Murieta* into his own novel and, in doing so, he enters into the discourse that it has affected. Regardless of whether or not Wheeler chooses to write "Literature," it is the utilization of elements that come from a text that was written under the auspices of something "better than sensationalist literature" that creates the connection to Ridge's novel. This does not necessarily mean that one or both of these novels subscribe to some "literary ideal" that classifies their work as being superior. The construction of the discursive elements within each novel is what matters in this instance, and the similarities are so striking that I argue the books are linked through a system of discursive citation.

⁵⁹ Bill Brown, introduction, *Reading the West: An Anthology of Dime Westerns*, Bill Brown, ed., (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997) 269.

Another problem that might arise out of this definition (in terms of authorship) occurs when we look at the way Brown portrays Wheeler's position as an author of "the West." This is important to discuss because, as the title would suggest, *Deadwood Dick* takes place in Deadwood, South Dakota. This setting is quite different from California for numerous reasons, but the primary dissimilarity would be that the racial tensions between white settlers (and the government that supports them) and the Mexicans who are still reeling from the Mexican-American War, is basically absent. This is not to say that there not any racial tensions present in South Dakota during this time period (miners settled on Native American land at the time), but they are not necessarily analogous to the issues that Murieta faces in Ridge's novel.

In addition to this issue is the fact that, according to Brown, Wheeler did not believe in the need for a writer to visit or live in the world of his novel. Wheeler scoffed at men like "Colonel Prentiss Ingraham [who] fought for the Confederacy, for Juarez in Mexico, for Austria against Prussia, for Crete against Turkey and for Cuban independence before returning to the United States, where he joined up with William Cody as a frontiersman."⁶⁰ Instead, Wheeler "was content to write of the West from his peaceful home in the East, never venturing so far as western Pennsylvania."⁶¹ This example depicts the difference between Wheeler and Ridge. Wheeler decided to portray places that he had never visited. Alternatively, Ridge lived in the places he wrote about and experienced the type violence that he described.

⁶⁰ Brown 269.

⁶¹ Brown 269.

Even with Wheeler's anonymity, his creation, Deadwood Dick, was quite prolific. "He completed thirty-three Deadwood Dick novels between 1877 and 1884, establishing, with the exception of Buffalo Bill, the most successful serialized hero in the genre."⁶² What is surprising about Wheeler's success is that his character seemed to outlive him. Johannsen asserts that, after Wheeler's death, there were many Deadwood Dick novels published pseudonymously.⁶³ Brown argues that this may be the reason Beadle decided to "suppress news of Wheeler's death while continuing to put his name on the work of staff writers."⁶⁴ The idea that Beadle believed Wheeler's name had so much influence over the opinions of the people who read his books is important to note in the context of Ridge's problems with the intellectual property rights of his own novel. It points to two developments that affect the renegade hero genre. First, the publishing industry began to recognize the titular value of popular fiction writers. Also, this shows that a change had occurred in the renegade hero genre. The author of a character had complete control of that character. Whereas *Joaquin Murieta* was taken from John Rollin Ridge and rewritten in a variety of ways, each renegade hero can be seen as having a sort of stability due to publishers realizing the importance of the writer in the efficacy and continued success of a dime novel series. While this is not entirely true (in the sense that Deadwood Dick continued to shape discourse regardless of whether or not the public knew about

⁶² Brown 277.

⁶³ Brown describes Johannsen's position on p. 270. Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams and its dime and nickel novels: the story of a vanished literature* (Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1962).

⁶⁴ Brown 270.

Wheeler's death), it is an important idea that needs to be taken into consideration when discussing the development of the renegade hero subgenre.

It is important to note that *Deadwood Dick* was seen as an anomaly during the time period that it was written. Both Brown and Michael Denning argue that Deadwood Dick was a character unlike anything that had been published at that time in the United States.⁶⁵ Brown notes that "Wheeler's Deadwood Dick was a new type of Western hero: the bandit, the vengeful outlaw who refuses to comply with what he understands to be a corrupt legal system, the outsider who remains on the margins of society as a "merry road-agent" with his fellow outsiders."⁶⁶ And Denning quotes Daryl Jones when he describes Deadwood Dick in saying that "never before had a Western hero openly defied the law. Never before had a Western hero reacted against social restraint so violently as to waylay stages and rob banks."⁶⁷

To classify this type of character as "new" might be a bit of an exaggeration. These arguments seem to be tracing the lineage of Deadwood Dick back to the "merry road-agent" (who we can only assume is Robin Hood), placing him within the context of a Western setting, and calling this the beginning of a larger trend. The attributes that Brown and Denning cite as occurring for the first time in Wheeler's novel characterize elements that are present in Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta*.

This is not to say that the Deadwood Dick and Joaquin Murieta are so similarly constructed that we can call them "the same character." The main difference

⁶⁵ Michael Denning takes this position in *Mechanic Accents*.

⁶⁶ Brown 270.

⁶⁷ Denning 270. This quotation is a reference to: Jones 81.

between the characters seems to be that Deadwood Dick is a product of his time. Brown describes how the rise of capitalism and industrialization became a target of popular satire, and how Deadwood Dick was a representative of that perspective. “Wheeler was depicting rich capitalists as villains, easily manipulating the law, at a time when the nation had grown sensitive to the struggles between business and labor.”⁶⁸ Brown argues that Deadwood Dick’s actions may have been a reflection of the popular preoccupation with the founding of the Knights of Labor in 1869, the National Labor Reform Party formation in 1872, and the labor tensions erupting in the Great Railway Strike of 1877.⁶⁹ This argument ignores that there had been at least one hero in popular fiction who had risen up against capitalist structures by this point. To view Ridge’s portrayal of mining towns in early California as anything but an exploitation of the laws that are put into place to protect settlers (or capitalists) would be to ignore ideas that are incredibly important to Ridge’s text. This is not to say that the public reaction to *Joaquin Murieta* can be equated with *Deadwood Dick*. I do not intend to argue with Denning’s contention that *Deadwood Dick* can be considered something that is “new.” The two texts are incredibly different in numerous ways. But I argue that some of the discursive elements that are cited by Brown and Denning as being unique to *Deadwood Dick* are actually traceable to *Joaquin Murieta*.

In other words, the political message that *Joaquin Murieta* and *Deadwood Dick* relay to their contemporary audiences (Ridge’s anti-settlerist sentiments and Wheeler’s anti-big business “agenda”) allows us to see these texts as different. With

⁶⁸ Brown 270.

⁶⁹ Brown 270.

this in mind, Wheeler's text could be viewed as the beginning of a larger movement (in terms of popular texts as satire) especially with the widespread publication of dime novels. But to discount the thematic connections, character structure parallels, and allusions to scenes from *Joaquin Murieta* would be to simply ignore critical elements of *Deadwood Dick*'s composition.

Deadwood, The Mining Town

With this in mind, we must address some of these similarities and how they function within the texts. As argued in the previous chapter, the mining town is an important part of the discourse of the renegade hero. Wheeler's description of Deadwood is integral to our understanding of Deadwood Dick. Wheeler describes Deadwood as "the place where men are literally made rich and poor in one day and night."⁷⁰ He notes that in "Deadwood districts, every foot of available ground has been "claimed" and staked out; the population has increased from fifteen to more than twenty-five hundred souls."⁷¹ The problems with Deadwood are a result of the quick rise in population of the city and the rapid exchange of wealth.

Wheeler's Deadwood is a place where the law cannot control the constant illegal interactions. For instance, when Ned Harris first interacts with Harry Redburn at the Metropolitan saloon, he forces Redburn to take legal revenge against a man

⁷⁰ Edward J. Wheeler, *Deadwood Dick, The Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills*, Bill Brown, ed., *Reading the West: An Anthology of Dime Westerns* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997) 279.

⁷¹ Wheeler 279.

who has cheated him at cards.⁷² The bar patrons know the legal punishment for cheating, but no one is there to enforce it. Wheeler's description of Deadwood seems to be hinting that the town, as a result of its inadequate attempts to create accommodations for more people than it can support, is structurally unsound.

Deadwood echoes the mining towns that are depicted in *Joaquin Murieta*. In both novels, the mining town is a space that necessarily breeds the exploitation of people who do not accept, and instead exploit the limitations of the substandard legal structure. It allows people driven by the pursuit of riches to take positions of power through methods that are technically legal, but, in the context of Deadwood Dick's position, morally questionable. For example, Fearless Frank and Deadwood Dick approach Ned Harris's gold claim and both Geoffrey Nix and Harry Redburn deal with the intruders as though it was their mine to manage.⁷³ Neither Redburn nor Nix has any right to give commands about the claim because Harris (the "original" owner of the claim) is absent, but instead of deferring the visitors to Anita (Harris's sister), they converse with Frank and Dick as though the mine were their property. Dick does not attack these men, but this is the type of land usurpation that causes Dick to act against other people in the region.⁷⁴ Deadwood Dick works as an agent who enforces a moral perception that is often ignored by those people who take advantage of the problems that exist in the Western mining town.

⁷² Wheeler 288-289.

⁷³ Wheeler 328-335.

⁷⁴ For example, Hugh Vansevere. Wheeler 281.

Like *Joaquin Murieta*, the development of thematic elements concerning the identity of the renegade hero is also an important aspect of *Deadwood Dick*. There are number of scenes from *Deadwood Dick* that not only allude to some of the more important ways that Ridge's novel deals with Joaquin's identity, but they also refer to specific scenes that deal with the difference between the character's life as an outlaw and how it affects the life led by the man behind the mask.

The Wanted Poster Scene

One scene that addresses the renegade hero's identity occurs when Deadwood Dick finds a wanted poster that displays a reward for his capture. In *Deadwood Dick*, Deadwood Dick sees the poster with his name and face on it, and reacts in an uncharacteristic manner. He "read the notice, and then a wild sardonic laugh burst from beneath his mask – a terrible, blood-curdling laugh, that made even the powerful animal he bestrode start and prick up its ears."⁷⁵ This visceral reaction might seem unexpected for a man who is often hunted by others, but Dick's laughter implies that he is unaware of his own prominence. Dick then says that he "was not aware that [he] had attained such a desperate notoriety as that document implies."⁷⁶ As a result of this interaction, Deadwood Dick decides that he will kill the man who is responsible for posting the bounty.

Dick's decision to murder Hugh Vansevere (the man who put up the poster) puts this speech in question. His "notoriety" is a product of acts that, while not fully

⁷⁵ Wheeler 281.

⁷⁶ Wheeler 281.

detailed in the novel, seem to be a result of the re-appropriation of misbegotten wealth. But, according to Dick, Vansevere should have known enough about him to realize that posting a reward for his life would cause Dick to retaliate. The problem with this idea is that Deadwood Dick playfully complains about the way people like Hugh Vansevere are defaming his character. He says that, “they will make [him] out a murderer before they get through.”⁷⁷ It seems like Dick does not want to be known as a murderer, but he chooses to find Vansevere and kill him for creating the bounty. Why does Dick want to propagate a myth about himself if he is unhappy with it? In other words, if Deadwood Dick is worried about men like Hugh Vansevere making him into a caricature of the kind of outlaw that he is, why would he support those ideas by reinforcing that identity through seeking out the man and killing him?

There are two explanations for Deadwood Dick’s position. The first is that Dick wants to use the wanted poster as an opportunity to enhance the perception of his mythic creation (his outlaw “character”). He wants to kill the man who he believes has transgressed the moral code that he chooses to protect. Dick sees Vansevere as a man of wealth who wants to protect his interests from the road-agents who would see it removed. He wants to make an example of the man. That is to say, when Deadwood Dick sees the wanted poster, he is putting on a performance. He does not like the idea that someone else controls the public perception of his “character.” Dick chooses to uphold the values that he sees as superseding the rights of men like Vansevere because he knows how he would like to be viewed by the

⁷⁷ Wheeler 280.

public, and he chooses to take an active role in the creation and propagation of “Deadwood Dick.” By pursuing Vansevere, Dick also makes a preemptive move; he shows the other capitalists that might want to attack him that there will be repercussions for their actions.

Another way to look at this scene is through its relationship to a very similar scene in *Joaquin Murieta*. In Ridge’s novel, Murieta approaches a series of signs and notices. One reads: “five thousand dollars reward for Joaquin, dead or alive.”⁷⁸ Murieta responds to the poster by putting his own reward on it. He writes beneath the original bounty that “I will give \$10,000” and signs his name.⁷⁹ This type of performative action is characteristic of Murieta, but also, the renegade hero. Deadwood Dick responds a bit differently to the wanted poster, but in a manner that is still representative of the renegade hero. The renegade hero is identified by his choice to take action against the people responsible for the bounty, while at the same time shaping the public’s perception of his “character.” He views the notice as an extension of the people who post it, and his actions are a way of saying: “If that’s who you want me to be, I can do it better than that.”

Joaquin’s decision to raise the reward for his own capture (or murder) seems to function in two ways. First, it reflects a thematic element of the novel that becomes integral to the construction of the renegade hero. Murieta’s need to portray his “worth” as being greater than the original reward shows the way in which the renegade hero constantly tries to extend and expand his own myth. Murieta’s bounty

⁷⁸ Ridge 68.

⁷⁹ Ridge 68.

tells all of his enemies that they cannot “afford” the amount of money that would be needed to capture him. But, more importantly, it shows the public that Murieta has more control over the region than the men who follow “the law.”

This performance works very similarly to the way that Deadwood Dick addresses his own bounty. That is to say, both Dick and Joaquin choose to evaluate their worth as an outlaw (and the myth that goes along with those ideas) on a level that addresses the public only tangentially. In Dick’s speech, he acknowledges that the public has yet to take notice of his actions, but, unlike Joaquin, he does not use money as a way of displaying what the public *should* think of him. Deadwood Dick’s perception of his own worth seems to be based on his need to enact violence. The important issue here is not how Dick and Joaquin choose to change the perception of themselves from the posters they encounter, but that they both see the bounty as an impetus for action. The outlaws both use a performative action in order to alter the way that posters portray them. For Dick, this means that he will use force to show that he is the kind of outlaw whose identity extends past the use of a wanted poster. Joaquin’s approach to the situation seems different, but has the same result. He decides to nullify the bounty by displaying its inadequacy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Joaquin Murieta often “names himself” before an assassination attempt. Sometimes he whispers into his victim’s ear and sometimes he presents himself to all of the people around him. In *Deadwood Dick*, Deadwood Dick also names himself to his intended target. Naming in *Joaquin Murieta* is an action that reifies the mythic qualities of the outlaw. Murieta uses the

action as a way of portraying the character that he has created to both the people who are present during the assassination, but also to himself. This need is again demonstrated by Murieta's decision to write his name down on the wanted poster. Murieta cannot allow any other person to name him because it detracts from his power as "writer" of the character. By re-appropriating the wanted poster, Joaquin asserts the character that he chooses to portray. This, in a sense, strengthens and concretizes the bandit that he is trying to create, and it does not allow his enemies to write his character for him.

Naming, for Deadwood Dick, functions differently than for Murieta. Deadwood Dick does not use a pencil to name himself. He takes action in a way that echoes some of Murieta's assassinations. He chooses to write his name as a signature upon the murder of the man who misnamed him.

While Deadwood Dick and Joaquin Murieta take different types of action in response to their wanted posters, Deadwood Dick's reaction concludes with a scene that directly references the scenes in which Murieta names himself to his victims. After seeing the wanted poster, Dick goes to the Metropolitan Saloon where he asks for Hugh Vansevere. When Vansevere identifies himself, Dick immediately approaches the man and explains to him that he knows Vansevere is the man who is "advertising for one Deadwood Dick, [and that] he has come to pay [him] his respects."⁸⁰ With the name "Deadwood Dick" floating through the saloon, Dick shoots the man.

⁸⁰ Wheeler 284.

This scene is an allusion to the numerous times Joaquin Murieta reveals his name to those men whom he assassinates. Deadwood Dick appears to have the same motive as Murieta when he murders Vansevere, but there is an important difference. Dick, unlike Joaquin, portrays his “character” in a more literal way than Murieta. In other words, Deadwood Dick is not a real person. Edward Harris uses the pseudonym of Deadwood Dick in order to function within Deadwood as an outlaw. This means that every time Harris becomes Dick, he takes on the role of a character that he must make believable to both the people he approaches, and also to himself. This dynamism between identities forces Dick to constantly perform. For Worden, this performative action shows that Deadwood Dick is more than simply a name. “The bandit has interpellated himself and others into a recognition of banditry as a viable mode of action.”⁸¹ Through naming, Deadwood Dick legitimates the actions of the renegade hero within the eyes of the public. Whenever he puts on the guise of the outlaw, all of his actions are motivated by the goal of creating his “character,” and what the actions of that character should be.

When Deadwood Dick reveals his true identity, he rips off his mask and names himself, saying: “My name is, to you, Edward Harris.”⁸² He continues by saying, “I have another [name] – my family name – but I do not use it.”⁸³ Like Murieta, Edward Harris, or Deadwood Dick, is a fragmented character. He has no

⁸¹ Worden’s article discusses issues of masculinity in a few dime novel Westerns. He analyzes the “Wanted Poster” scene from *Deadwood Dick* using Althusser’s discussion of hailing in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” but his conclusion, while limiting due to its scope (dime novel Westerns) can be applied to my discussion of discursive “naming”: Worden 35-60.

⁸² Wheeler 353.

⁸³ Wheeler 353. Worden uses this scene as a transition into a discussion about Deadwood Dick’s inability to marry.

respite from his performance and is constrained by the variety of roles that he plays. Wheeler never reveals the name of the man playing the role of Harris, but he gives us insight into that character's perception of how an outlaw should act.

Deadwood Dick is a product of the discursive elements that Edward Harris believes create the hero that he chooses to be. He solidifies the creation of the renegade hero by knowingly invoking the discursive elements that have been identified and passed down from Murieta, and he chooses to appropriate those elements into his own character. Deadwood Dick is a product of the renegade hero discourse because he decides, as someone who is aware of the mythic figures within the discourse, to portray himself in a manner that fits the purpose of the renegade hero. In other words, Deadwood Dick's identity is not revenge-driven like Murieta's. Murieta fashions his identity by necessity, but Dick's identity is a re-appropriation of his perception of the renegade hero.

Rewriting the Renegade Hero

Appreciating the similarities this analysis implies, we must also note how it creates a split between Deadwood Dick and Joaquin Murieta in terms of their construction. Murieta's perception of the role he plays in California is different from the way that Dick perceives himself because Murieta initiates the discourse that Dick works within. Dick has the opportunity to rewrite the discourse because he understands the outcome of the Murieta-type story, the renegade hero story. Dick can create his character in such a way that he will not be killed at the hands of a man like

Captain Love. This is evident in the way that Dick constantly absorbs the kind of damage that would kill another man (including Murieta), and he survives these attacks without enduring much harm. One particularly striking example occurs at the climactic battle between Deadwood Dick and the men who hunt him for the majority of the novel (the Fillmores). The scene concludes with Alexander Fillmore's knife being "buried in the fleshy part of Deadwood Dick's neck."⁸⁴ Dick's wound does not resemble Murieta's death scene (he dies from a gunshot wound), but it does resemble the treatment that Murieta's corpse receives after his death. After killing Murieta, Captain Love "caused the head of the renowned Murieta to be cut off and to be hurried away with the utmost expedition to the nearest place, one hundred and fifty miles, at which any alcohol could be obtained to preserve it."⁸⁵

Dick's neck wound should function similarly to Murieta's beheading. The Fillmores catch him at a disadvantage. According to discourse (as set out by *Joaquin Murieta*) this attack should result in his death. This is the point in the narrative when Edward Harris's awareness of the renegade hero becomes apparent. His construction of Deadwood Dick alters the discourse. Not only is Dick's wound non-mortal, but "it was not dangerous but was so exceedingly painful that the pangs soon brought him back to consciousness."⁸⁶ The attempt at "beheading" Dick results in a wound that actually revives him. In other words, Harris alters the makeup of the discourse when

⁸⁴ Wheeler 350.

⁸⁵ Ridge 156.

⁸⁶ Wheeler 351.

he re-appropriates the identity of the renegade hero such that Murieta's flaw becomes Dick's strength.

Gender Confusion and the Outlaw Woman

The issue of cross-dressing is integrally related to the discursive element of identity, and both *Joaquin Murieta* and *Deadwood Dick* depict a woman who dresses (or acts) in a manner that obscures her gender. In the previous chapter, I discuss the women who accompany Joaquin Murieta in his travels and disguise themselves in men's dress. In *Deadwood Dick*, this same type of portrayal occurs. Unlike Ridge, Wheeler does not keep his cross-dressing women as anonymous companions to the men who accompany the renegade hero. In *Deadwood Dick*, Wheeler often describes Calamity Jane in a manner that obscures her gender.

The reader's first introduction to Calamity Jane subtly describes her clothes and appearance. The description implies that she is a masculine figure. While there are a few touches that obscure the certainty as to whether or not she is a man, she is ultimately revealed to be a woman. The second time that Jane appears in the novel, her description is a bit less nuanced. Wheeler describes a young man playing cards at the Metropolitan Saloon in Deadwood and notes that "the youth kept on [playing cards], a quiet smile resting on his pleasant features, a twinkle in his coal-black eye," and then Wheeler explains that "the youth, dear reader, you have met before."⁸⁷ This

⁸⁷ Wheeler 317.

description is obviously meant to confuse the reader, but Wheeler quickly reveals that “*he* is not he, but instead – Calamity Jane.”⁸⁸

Wheeler’s description of Jane is an anomaly. There is no other woman in *Deadwood Dick* who is described using the masculine pronoun. As with the women who accompany Murieta, the clothes that Calamity Jane wears do not explain why she is characterized as a man. In other words, a woman in man’s dress, especially in a town like Deadwood, would not necessarily be mistaken for a man. This idea supports the notion that Calamity Jane (and the role of cross-dressing and therefore masculinized woman) in the discourse of the renegade hero creates an aura of mystery about the sexuality of the renegade. For Murieta, one of the unnamed, cross-dressing women is his companion. The relationship between Calamity Jane and Deadwood Dick remains undefined until the end of the novel. Dick proposes to Jane, and she refuses.⁸⁹ It is as though Wheeler attempts to define the relationship between Jane and Dick in some sort of heteronormative fashion, but the women who represent the romantic interests of the renegade hero cannot be so easily categorized. The gender confusion surrounding a character like Calamity Jane is a product of the renegade hero’s choice to associate himself with women who cannot function as his partner in a domestic setting.

Worden discounts Dick’s inability to marry as being a publisher’s attempt to keep the narrative open and allow for sequels. He argues that it is actually an issue of

⁸⁸ Wheeler 317.

⁸⁹ Wheeler 357.

masculinity that keeps Dick from entering into a normative marriage.⁹⁰ “Deadwood Dick’s removal from the conventional marriage economy spins him into an alternate temporality. He exists outside of the normal rhythms of marriage and reproduction.”⁹¹ While this description holds interesting implications for the renegade hero and his inability to interact because of the performative framework, I find this argument unconvincing because it limits the role of Calamity Jane in Deadwood Dick’s proposal. She too exists within a non-normative framework and could be seen as taking on a role that places her in a very similar position as Dick. They are both outlaws (at least within the context of the story) who cannot exist comfortably in any community except the one that they create. Jane does not refuse Dick’s proposal because she thinks he is an unsuitable husband. She refuses Dick’s proposal because she knows that Dick *cannot* marry in the same way that she cannot marry.

Calamity Jane is a pivotal figure in the renegade hero discourse because she represents a transition. She illustrates a development towards the synchronization of the renegade hero and the cross-dressing woman. In *Joaquin Murieta*, the cross-dressing woman as an element of the novel implies that the renegade hero’s use of his “character” can be seen as something similar to the gender obscuration of his companions. But Calamity Jane depicts a female character who, like Murieta and Deadwood Dick, never fully relinquishes that indeterminacy. This opens up the possibility for a shift in the portrayal of the renegade hero.

⁹⁰ Worden 51.

⁹¹ Worden 51.

III. The Last of the Renegades

Dashing Diamond Dick; or, The Tigers of Tombstone (1898) is a dime novel by W.B. Lawson. It appears to be Street and Smith's response to the success and popularity of the Deadwood Dick dime series. The novel focuses on the arrival of Diamond Dick in Tombstone, Arizona. After witnessing the abuse of Alice Marr by Tornado Tom, Dick immediately responds by challenging the man to a duel. Their feud remains one of the main, narrative threads of the novel. The other central element of the story concerns the relationship of Thomas K. Cat, his outlaw gang (the Tombstone Tigers), and Tombstone. The two storylines come together at the end of the novel when Diamond Dick realizes that Thomas K. Cat is his former fiancé.

Tombstone

Before discussing the construction of the renegade hero in *Diamond Dick*, it is important to note and define the link between the mining towns in Ridge and Wheeler's novels, and Lawson's description and use of Tombstone. Even though the tone of Lawson's account seems to imply that Tombstone is a hospitable town, he explains the situation straightforwardly. He notes that, "tents, shanties, and houses sprang up by the hundreds" when gold was discovered.⁹² This description is reminiscent of Wheeler's Deadwood. As discussed in the last chapter, Wheeler's characterization of the mining city does not necessarily point directly at the problems

⁹² W.B. Lawson, *Dashing Diamond Dick, or, The Tigers of Tombstone* (USA: CPSIA) 1.

in the system. It hints at them. Like Lawson, he calls attention to how “the streets are swarming with constantly arriving new-comers,” and how “the stores and saloons are literally crammed at all hours.”⁹³ These two descriptions seem to be working in a similar manner, but Lawson qualifies the setting even further by noting how “the strong predominated and the weak went under, and men went mad in their insane greed for gold.”⁹⁴ This language is much more critical than the diction that Wheeler uses in his description of Deadwood. Wheeler’s Deadwood is not necessarily characterized as a bad place. It is a crowded area, but the “miners are working in the mines, and the harvest reaped by them is not at all discouraging.”⁹⁵ The gold seems to be plentiful in Deadwood, and there is no outbreak of mass hysteria.

While this may not imply that Wheeler’s perception of Deadwood is necessarily different than Lawson’s Tombstone, Lawson’s description opens up the possibility for the existence of a renegade hero in a much more overt manner than Wheeler. If there are problems that are so ingrained in the town’s construction that the author directly addresses them, the existence of a person (or people) who feel that they should take action against the wrongdoings that are being perpetrated (but not punished) seems to be much greater than that of Wheeler’s Deadwood.

Diamond Dick, The Almost-Renegade

⁹³ Wheeler 279.

⁹⁴ Lawson 1.

⁹⁵ Wheeler 279.

This discrepancy is important to note because of the way that it operates in *Diamond Dick*. The fact that Lawson explicitly displays Tombstone as a city in disarray seems to imply that there might be more than just one person whose “moral code” would supersede the principles that Tombstone writes into law. This issue becomes apparent through Lawson’s new portrayal of the renegade hero.

The portrayal of the renegade hero in *Diamond Dick* functions in a manner that is a bit different from past entries in the discourse. This is not to say that Lawson strays far enough away from the elements and scenes of the genre that the novel should be discounted as something entirely dissimilar, but Lawson’s portrayal of the renegade hero complicates the representation of the renegade hero by assigning some of the different attributes that are integral to the construction of the renegade hero to *several* characters throughout the novel. This portrayal might seem to weaken an argument that attempts to reconcile the development of discursive elements in different novels over a certain period of time, but, because all of the necessary aspects are present in *Diamond Dick*, there does not seem to be a reason to exclude it from a discussion of the discourse.

The renegade hero, as he exists in both *Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854) and *Deadwood Dick, The Prince of the Road; or, The Black Rider of the Black Hills* (1877), is a complex figure whose motives cannot be summed up in a few sentences. Yet, there are some aspects of his character that are readily apparent. He is an outlaw. He prioritizes his own “moral code” before the laws that have been established in the mining town (or region) that he inhabits (or

harasses). He creates a character by continually “naming” himself in the presence of the townspeople and his enemies. All of these discursive elements are present in *Diamond Dick*, but they are not necessarily all exemplified by one person.

For *Joaquin Murieta* and *Deadwood Dick*, the identity of the renegade hero is not a mystery. The title character, the protagonist and the renegade hero are all the same person. The title character in *Diamond Dick* is not the renegade hero of the novel. Diamond Dick does not have all of the attributes that this paper has argued are necessary to call a character a renegade hero. If anyone in the novel could be perceived as the central renegade hero figure it would be Thomas K. Cat, the leader of the Tigers of Tombstone. But to ignore Diamond Dick would belittle the role that he plays in establishing the relationship between *Diamond Dick*, *Deadwood Dick*, and *Joaquin Murieta*.

The most obvious link between the protagonists of *Diamond Dick* and *Deadwood Dick* is their shared name. Dick seems to be Lawson’s allusion to his novel’s predecessor. And while “Dashing” and “Deadwood” have different meanings within the context of their respective novels, the initials D.D. with the common name “Dick” being the second of the two “D’s” seems to be a purposeful reference by Lawson. While this connection does not play any significant role in the analytical interpretation of the novel or the thematic construction of the discourse, it is an example, albeit cursory, of how *Diamond Dick* works within the same framework as the previous two novels.

While this analysis might imply that Diamond Dick works in parallel to other characters that have been characterized as renegade heroes, this is not entirely the case. Diamond Dick resembles the alter ego of Deadwood Dick. Because Diamond Dick is not an outlaw, he does not take on the persona of a man whose goal is to counteract the problematic construction of the mining town that he enters. Instead, he works as a member of the town in a way that runs parallel to the disposition of the citizenry, but his actions are a product of a renegade hero-type “moral code.” Another man who exhibits this type of relationship to the mining town is Edward Harris, or, the man behind Deadwood Dick’s mask.

For Edward Harris, the Metropolitan Saloon (or “The Met”) in Deadwood is a hotbed for criminal activity that he feels obligated to patrol. The man behind the Deadwood Dick “character” does not necessarily leave his entire role (as renegade hero) when he takes off his mask. After watching a young man (Harry Redburn) being cheated at a poker table in the saloon, Harris points a gun at both the cheater and the young man. He explains that Redburn “*must salt that card-sharp, or [Harris] will certainly salt [him].*”⁹⁶ Redburn, at Harris’s behest, shoots the man. Should the wronged, in the case of cheating, be the person to enact the retribution, especially if violence is needed for the punishment? Perhaps the most important question in this situation is why does no one attempt to requisition the help of a law enforcement official? Harris seems to understand that the “law” which supposedly governs

⁹⁶ Wheeler 288.

Deadwood is not enforced. It is his duty, as a private citizen, to enact some type of justice.

The renegade hero, in his masked visage, never seems to display his “moral code” this clearly. The actions of the renegade hero seem to imply a belief system that would necessitate them enacting the same kind of violence upon Catamount Cass (the cheater in the Metropolitan saloon) and Tornado Tom (in the case of Diamond Dick), but the renegade hero never consults the surrounding public for their opinion of his actions. The renegade hero simply acts. While this description seems to characterize Deadwood Dick, in no instance does it fully encapsulate the actions of Diamond Dick.

The scene that best illuminates the parallel between Edward Harris and Diamond Dick occurs during Dick’s first appearance in the novel. After arriving in town with his son Bertie, Dick notices that a man, Tornado Tom, seems to be harassing a woman, and he intervenes. Dick chides Tom for his actions and Dick’s “words lashed Tornado Tom into madness. Perhaps for the first time in his arrogant sway had he been thus roughly handled.”⁹⁷ This description importantly depicts the manner in which Diamond Dick chooses to handle the men who, through means of violence or power, take advantage of their position within the mining town. It seems that there is either a conspicuous absence of law enforcement officials in Tombstone, or Diamond Dick assumes that the people who should be controlling men like Tornado Tom are unable to perform their duties. Diamond Dick, like Edward Harris,

⁹⁷ Lawson 6.

chooses to thrust the situation into the face of the people who surround him. The locals cannot ignore Tom's misconduct when Diamond Dick waylays him. He does not attempt to undermine the construction of the city (in terms of the appropriation of power and wealth), but he attempts to address a symptom of that corruption. Whereas the renegade hero chooses to operate outside of the way that a city (or region) governs itself (and are called lawbreakers for their actions), Diamond Dick chooses to work within the limits of the law. He performs violent actions in a public setting, but, instead of angering the larger community (as the renegade heroes tend to do), he is embraced by them. Heinrich Schwauenflage's congratulatory reaction to Diamond Dick's actions against Tornado Tom evidences this.⁹⁸

This is not to say that Diamond Dick's interaction with Tornado Tom cannot be seen (at least partially) as the work of the renegade hero. Unlike Harris (when he "brings justice" to the Metropolitan Saloon), Diamond Dick's altercation with Tornado Tom seems to be his attempt to portray a character. In other words, Diamond Dick, while not a bandit or an outlaw, functions in a similar way to the renegade hero when it comes to the depiction of his identity. For instance, when Tornado Tom asks Diamond Dick for his name so that he can make sure it will be correctly spelled on his headstone, Dick replies that he has "no intention of putting [Tom] to any funeral expenses on [his] account," and he continues by telling the rest of the people around him that they "may call [him] Diamond Dick."⁹⁹ By naming himself to the crowd, Diamond Dick places himself in the same position as the renegade hero who,

⁹⁸ Schwauenflage thanks Diamond Dick for attempting to fight Tornado Tom: Lawson 11.

⁹⁹ Lawson 8.

characteristically, performs the same type of action. He plays the role of the character that stands up to men like Tornado Tom, and his confidence, real or fabricated, comes across in his words.

By itself, this self-awareness and crowd-interaction would make an enquiry into the meaning of Diamond Dick's performance worthwhile for analysis, but add to this the fact that Dick follows this presentation by tossing aside his cloak to reveal numerous articles of clothing studded with "a myriad of diamonds," and Dick's appearance in Tombstone almost seems like a staged performance.¹⁰⁰ Instead of wearing a mask, Dick plainly shows his face, but he diverts attention away from it with the blinding light of his garments that are peppered with gems. Diamond Dick complicates the discursive categories that have been used to discuss the renegade hero up until this point by expanding their usage.

For Edward Harris, everything about his appearance and manner is discreet when he moves through the Metropolitan Saloon. He remains a shadow until he chooses to stop the cheating that he witnesses at the gambling tables. Joaquin Murieta, when he's not donning the garb and demeanor of his bandit persona, functions in a very similar way. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Joaquin is even mistaken for a red-haired man when he walks through a crowded group of people.¹⁰¹ Diamond Dick, on the other hand, is always visible. After his arrival, he is constantly in the public eye. He attacks Tornado Tom in the street, attends the opera, and rides after a kidnapped woman all within a brief period. Wherever there is a crowd and

¹⁰⁰ Lawson 8.

¹⁰¹ Ridge 51

some trouble, “Diamond Dick was there.”¹⁰² Perhaps the reason for this is because, unlike Harris and Murieta, Diamond Dick does not have an alternate identity.

On a practical level, Murieta and Harris need to keep their non-outlaw personas in check so that they do not attract the attention of people who would like to arrest (or kill) them. But their quiet demeanors also function as a way of highlighting the characters that they portray when they become renegade heroes. This is not to say that Harris or the un-costumed Murieta represent their “true selves,” but the fact that they have an alternate identity (or way of behaving and living) shows how they have to fashion their “characters” to fit the purpose that they are working toward. Diamond Dick, not being an outlaw, does not need to employ this type of secrecy. He is a vigilante figure who has the respect of the town. “His handsome face and rich attire had appealed to their admiration, his cool daring and the way he had handled [Tornado Tom] had won their respect.”¹⁰³ This portrayal of Dick is the only description that Lawson gives. He never tries to blend in with the crowd or keep his identity a secret. In other words, the character that Diamond Dick displays is all Lawson shows the reader, and his persona seems to exist in a liminal space between the renegade hero and the man behind the mask.

While this does not change the argument set forth in this paper, it does show how the re-appropriation of the renegade hero discourse moves aspects of the renegade hero into the framework of a more traditional protagonist (a non-outlaw

¹⁰² Lawson 13.

¹⁰³ Lawson 10.

hero), and how that character functions when he operates in the mode of a renegade hero.

Why, if Diamond Dick is not a traditional renegade hero, should we view Lawson's novel as an entrance into the renegade hero subgenre? I argue that Thomas K. Cat fully embodies the discursive elements that have been identified as being associated with the renegade hero. The importance of the discussion concerning Diamond Dick is that he is the title character of the novel, but he is not the prototypical example of a renegade hero.

The Renegade Heroine

It seems appropriate to begin with a familiar scene in order to address the issue of identity as it applies to Thomas K. Cat.¹⁰⁴ A notice that offers a \$1,000 reward for the capture (or killing) of the person who murdered the driver of a bank carriage is posted in the Tombstone plaza. Immediately "a youth of nineteen or twenty—a gawky, stoop-shouldered fellow, with a freckled face, and a shock of white-brown hair, that looked like a dirty mop" approaches it.¹⁰⁵ Lawson describes how the youth joins the group of people gathered around the poster, exclaiming that he "thought the 'Thomas K. Cat who bosses the Tigers of Tombstone' was valued at a

¹⁰⁴ Chapter II of this study examines scenes that depict the renegade hero's interaction with a wanted poster in both *Joaquin Murieta* and *Deadwood Dick*. Ridge 68, Wheeler 281 (respectively).

¹⁰⁵ Lawson 21.

higher figure than that.”¹⁰⁶ The reader eventually learns that this young man is Kate, Diamond Dick’s former fiancé, and he is also Thomas K. Cat.¹⁰⁷

Immediately after the crowd disperses, the nameless youth decides to take it upon himself to fix the mistake of offering too little of a reward for the capture of Cat. “Drawing a pencil from his pocket, he wrote rapidly for a few moments on the margin of the paper,” and this scrawl explains that he “will pay \$5,000 to the man who can take [Thomas K. Cat].”¹⁰⁸ The signature on this addition to the wanted poster is Thomas K. Cat’s.

This scene directly alludes to the wanted poster scenes in Wheeler’s *Deadwood Dick* and, more directly, Ridge’s *Joaquin Murieta*. As discussed in the previous chapter, this type of reaction to the reward notice is characteristic of the renegade hero because of the way that the wanted poster’s portrayal of the renegade hero exerts pressure on his own conception of that “character.” In other words, the youth decides to address the bank’s depiction of Cat because the youth, like Murieta, believes that the value assigned to the character that he has created is inadequate. This is evident because of the way that the youth purposefully says Cat’s name after reading the poster. Thomas K. Cat’s name is conspicuously absent from the sign, and the youth attempts to raise an awareness of his character while at the same time diminishing the bank’s representation of Cat. The youth’s assessment of the value of the outlaw is considerably greater than the bank’s, and the youth chooses to redact the

¹⁰⁶ Lawson 22.

¹⁰⁷ I will refer to Kate using the feminine pronoun, but I will refer to her attempts to portray men (the youth and Thomas K. Cat) with the masculine pronoun.

¹⁰⁸ Lawson 22.

bill within plain sight of the majority of the town. While he makes a “sharp glance around as he [finishes] speaking, to see that he [is] not observed,” Bertie (Diamond Dick’s son) sees him, but perhaps other people do as well.¹⁰⁹ The brazenness of the youth’s decision to write on the poster reflects how important the youth feels the poster is to the perception of his character.

This focus on the poster could be because Thomas K. Cat’s crimes are not publicized as the act of one person’s gang, but, instead, they are described as the actions of the Tombstone Tigers. Murieta performs the same kind of act with the same purpose, but there is a considerable difference between the scenes. When Murieta alters the wanted poster, he may not be portraying his renegade hero-type “character” because he is attempting to be an inconspicuous figure. As noted earlier in the chapter, Joaquin Murieta, when not committing the deeds of an outlaw, is a person that can move unseen through crowds. The youth’s words work in a contradictory manner to the way that Murieta attempts to operate. By speaking loudly and trying to alert people to his presence, he brings attention to his actions that the renegade heroes, when not portraying their characters, would never attempt. The youth purposefully acts this way because he is portraying *another* character. He is not attempting to blend into the crowd. In other words, because “the youth” is an additional character that Kate creates in order to monitor the goings-on of Tombstone, it seems that she believes she can depict him as a loud-mouthed local without the fear of being discovered. Fascinatingly, in the context of Murieta and Deadwood Dick’s

¹⁰⁹ Lawson 22.

reaction to the wanted poster, the creation of another character that further removes the renegade hero from the danger of being caught allows them (or at least the youth) to act with a much more aggressive attitude towards a community that would otherwise recognize them.

This reaction illustrates an issue of identity that constitutes a discursive feature of the renegade hero. As discussed in the previous chapter, the editing of a wanted poster can be seen as a form of “naming.” Thomas K. Cat never names himself in the way that Murieta, Deadwood Dick and Diamond Dick do. This could be for two reasons. One reason is that Thomas K. Cat does not necessarily display all of the attributes of the renegade hero because, not being the title character and the main protagonist, he is not a fully developed instantiation of those specific, discursive elements. While this argument has some validity (due to the title character exhibiting some aspects of the renegade hero), it is not entirely true. Deadwood Dick functions in a very similar way to Thomas K. Cat on the narrative level. Both of their identities are revealed late in the novel, and neither of them (or their alternate identities) are the singular focus of the novel. Also, they both perform actions (at least as is reported) that make their characterization as a law abiding, “good guy,” problematic.

This might seem to complicate the perception of Diamond Dick because of the way that he resembles an Edward Harris-type character, but Diamond Dick can also be seen as a character that resembles Fearless Frank.¹¹⁰ Both Frank and Diamond Dick run away from a problematic romantic relationship in their past, and they

¹¹⁰ Fearless Frank is a main character from Wheeler’s Deadwood Dick.

perform “chivalrous” deeds in order to help save women whom they meet. While the description of these characters sounds formulaic, the complexity of their construction lies in their past. Fearless Frank’s brother-in-law forces him to run away from his wife because of a ruse that he concocts in order to get a large inheritance.¹¹¹ Diamond Dick runs away from his fiancé because he fears that she is planning to murder him.¹¹² These characters both attempt to erase their problems by running away from an urban setting towards a territory that supports a mining town. The implication of this movement, in terms of these specific characters, seems to be an attempt to inhabit a space where they can portray themselves as the kind of men who can play the role of a strong, masculine man. They want to be able to sustain a normative relationship without dealing with any problems. Their goal, to rescue the women whom they come across, almost seems as though they are trying to prove that they are forced to leave their previous relationships and that doing so was an anomaly.

It is important to note that this parallel does not negate the issues discussed earlier in the chapter concerning Diamond Dick’s renegade hero-like attributes. That argument is simply another way to view the characters in the novel from a normative reading of the renegade hero. While both perspectives can be rightfully argued, the purpose of this paper is not to qualify which interpretation should be prioritized. Instead, it is important to note that *Diamond Dick* develops the discourse in a way that Lawson is able to re-appropriate aspects of the renegade hero into a protagonist who operates alongside his renegade hero.

¹¹¹ Wheeler 354.

¹¹² Lawson 30.

Another reason that Thomas K. Cat does not name himself to any would-be victim is that he is never shown committing an act of violence. A witness explains how Cat killed the driver of the bank's carriage, and when Cat discharges his pistol at Tornado Tom and Diamond Dick (during their duel), he seems to have no intention of hurting them. There is only one moment when Thomas K. Cat, or at least his alternate identity, is depicted as killing someone. When Kate shoots Alice Marr, Dick's new fiancé, she does not say anything, and seems to immediately regret her action. The renegade hero's primary attribute has shifted (over half a century) from a focus on the creation and propagation of a character (through instances of "naming," epitomized in the "wanted poster" scenes) to the creation of numerous characters and the complication of normative gender roles. In other words, the importance of the "cross-dressing woman" has developed from a minor detail that is briefly referenced when describing nameless characters, to an attribute that is so important to the narrative that it is an integral part of the renegade hero's construction.

The "Cross-Dressing" Woman

The concealment of the renegade hero's alternate identity until a final "reveal" moment occurs in *Deadwood Dick*, and the narrator's disguising of a female character's gender using masculine pronouns also occurs in that novel.¹¹³ The culmination of this obscuration into a singular moment that focuses on one character is a development that not only depicts a new trend in the renegade hero subgenre, but

¹¹³ *Deadwood Dick* reveals his "true" identity: Wheeler 353.

also continues to extend one of the reoccurring themes of the discourse. There has not been a female character that takes on the role of the renegade hero in any of the precursor novels to *Diamond Dick*. It is a re-appropriation of the elements that seems to be a product of the fact that the title character, being male, does not portray the renegade hero. As such, the continuing theme of the renegade hero's problems with the "woman" with whom "he" fails to court becomes an issue that is at the forefront of the conclusion to the novel.

Diamond Dick says that he leaves Kate because he learns "what she was-as black within as she is fair without-a whitened sepulcher-a thing so vile that [he chooses] to give it no name while [Alice] is by-a woman, whom even while yet [his] kisses were warm upon her lips, was plotting in the arms of her lover against [his] honor."¹¹⁴ Kate responds to these allegations of wrongdoing with anger, but she does not verify the information. The truth of this ordeal is never fully explained because Kate never responds to Dick's claims. She kills Alice in a fit of rage and flees.

Like with *Murieta* and *Deadwood Dick*, Kate is a fragmented character. She moves fluidly between three different identities. Two of these are invented characters (the youth and Thomas K. Cat), and she must inhabit the dress and mannerisms of the opposite gender in order to depict them. To call Kate's portrayal of these characters a performative action seems to only be half correct. In the same way that Calamity Jane

¹¹⁴ Lawson 30.

takes on a non-normative, masculine role, Kate's masculinity does not seem to be a part of the "masks" that she wears.¹¹⁵

Kate is the product of a synchronization of the "cross-dressing woman" and the renegade hero. She embodies the indeterminacy of both figures and epitomizes their inability to function within a normative relationship. By combining the discursive characteristics of these two figures, Kate becomes an outsider to not only the mining town, but also to her own bandit gang. Lawson implies that Kate's outlaw posse knows her identity, but she is still forced to lead them as Thomas K. Cat.¹¹⁶ The relationship of the "cross-dressing woman" to the mining town is defined by her inability to function as a normative member of the community. There is also a definition of normativity that pertains to the outlaw community, and, while there is a place for the "cross-dressing woman" in this framework, Kate cannot fill that role. She is an aggregate of different discursive elements from the renegade hero discourse, and, because of this, she is the last of the renegade heroes.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper is to describe the creation and development of the renegade hero subgenre. In doing so, it highlights the discursive connections of three novels: John Rollin Ridge's *Joaquin Murieta*, Edward Wheeler's *Deadwood Dick* and

¹¹⁵ Calamity Jane is a woman in *Deadwood Dick* whose gender is often intentionally obscured by Wheeler (discussed in the previous chapter).

¹¹⁶ The unmasked Kate interacts with her "second in command": Lawson 31.

W.B. Lawson's *Diamond Dick*. Each novel portrays a character whose actions and appearance allow us to describe them as a "renegade hero."

A "renegade hero" is a character who lives in a Western mining town. S/he opposes the ruling class of that town through violence and thievery. The renegade hero's mission is to protect a set of beliefs that s/he values more than the law. These values tend to favor those inhabitants of the mining town who are mistreated by the wealthier miners and landowners. The renegade hero attempts to reframe the power hierarchy in the mining town by re-appropriating the wealth accrued by those in positions of economic or political control.

One of the most important discursive connections of the renegade hero novels is the renegade hero's use of naming. The renegade hero often says or writes his (or her) name in a public place as a performative action. S/he does this as a means of propagating the myth of the renegade hero and also to reify the identity of the renegade hero in the eyes of passersby. At least one of the renegade hero's attempts to name him/herself occurs during a "wanted poster scene" where the renegade hero is presented with a notice that details a bounty for his/her arrest. This scene occurs in each of the renegade hero novels and can be seen as a direct, discursive link.

The "cross-dressing woman" is another discursive element that is integral to the construction of the renegade hero discourse. In each of the renegade hero texts there is a reference to a woman whose gender is obscured. The descriptions of these women describe them when they dress in men's clothing and when they use masculine mannerisms. This, like naming, is a discursive element that deals with the

issue of identity and how different characters portray alternate personas. While Ridge barely touches on the “cross-dressing woman” in *Joaquin Murieta*, it eventually replaces naming as the most prominent discursive element of the renegade hero’s construction.

The primary issue that this paper addresses is how the construction of a discourse can limit our understanding of the texts within it. Many scholars use Jones’s description of the outlaw dime novel to analyze a selection of dime novels within a specific context, but this context is an artificial limitation.¹¹⁷

If we expand our analysis of *Deadwood Dick* and *Diamond Dick* to include a study of *Joaquin Murieta*, we can see that the two latter novels are products of discursive citation. *Joaquin Murieta* brings the renegade hero to life because of the way that Ridge depicts Murieta’s performative moments. Wheeler, in *Deadwood Dick*, takes these moments and expands upon them, creating a new character who functions similarly, but pushes the discursive elements of gender obscuration and character fragmentation (in terms of the portrayal of numerous identities) into the forefront of the discourse. Lawson’s portrayal of Kate and Diamond Dick pushes these ideas even further and, while still using the conventions of the discourse, completely reframes the subgenre.

While this paper analyzes a text from the 1850’s as a way of reframing the dime novel outlaw, exploring texts that are written after 1900 could also be productive. Popular heroes like Zorro and the Lone Ranger seem to have many

¹¹⁷ Jones 81.

features in common with the outlaws and renegades of 19th century popular fiction. Perhaps discussing the dime novel outlaws as the beginning of a larger trend could lead to a new mode of analysis for both the dime novel and the popular, modern Western.