

with the grotesque exhibition throughout California of Murieta's severed head and Three-Fingered Jack's severed hand—a display intended to terrify would-be outlaws while publicizing the state's monopoly on violence. Although Ridge's novel did not result in the establishment of impartial laws, sensational stories about Mexican bandits certainly contributed to the justification of police powers in California. Just a year after *Joaquín Murieta's* publication, California passed the Anti-Vagrancy Act, commonly known as the “Greaser Act,” which targeted “all persons who are commonly known as ‘Greasers’ or the issue of Spanish and Indian blood . . . and who go armed and are not peaceable and quiet persons.”

Joaquín Murieta is not just a foundational narrative of the state of California. It remains a vital novel today as racial profiling, deportations, criminalization, police violence, and racialized dispossession continue to devastate American communities in spite of putatively “colorblind” laws. Ridge's sympathetic account of Murieta's formation by unjust laws and racial violence offers a bracing rejoinder to racially disproportionate rates of incarceration, the systemic nature of antiblack police brutality, and the intensified militarization of the US-Mexico border fueled by racial stereotypes such as President Trump's invocation of “bad hombres.” Through both its psychologically nuanced portrait of Murieta and the parallels it presents between him and the men authorized to enforce the law, Ridge's novel enjoins readers to reconsider US laws and their administration in connection with histories of racialization, dispossession, and state-sanctioned violence.

HSUAN L. HSU

Suggestions for Further Reading

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