

**Finding its Place:  
Reading *The Squatter and Don* through Genres**

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## **Abstract in Norwegian**

Romanen *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) av María Amparo Ruiz de Burton skildrar endringane i California etter at det blei ein Amerikansk stat, og kva innverknad det hadde for “the Californios” (borgarar og landeigarar i eit meksikansk California) og deira status i samfunnet. Dei indianske folkeslaga, som var der frå byrjinga, vart ikkje rekna med.

Dei fleste kritikarar hevdar at denne romanen høyrer til innafor den historiske romansjangeren, men at den har også trekk frå andre sjangrar. Romanen er vanskeleg å plassere i ein bestemt sjanger, og eg vil undersøker kvifor i denne oppgåva. Eg ser på ulike sjangertrekk ved historiske romanar og samanliknar dei med “romanen” min, kva som samsvarar og kva som ikkje gjer det. Eg undersøker også korleis bruken av parodi skapar skilnad mellom denne romanen og andre romanar som høyrer til same sjanger. Eg påstår at parodibruken også blir viktig for å prøve å skape ein slags allianse med lesaren.

Forteljaren spelar ei vesentleg rolle i romanen fordi han / ho snakkar på vegne av “the Californios”, og forsøker å få lesaren til å sympatisere med dei. Forteljaren er ikkje ein karakter i romanen, men fungerer som eit slags vitne. Forteljaren sin funksjon som vitne og det siste kapittelet: “Out with the Invader” sitt særpreg gjer at eg difor vel og sjå på romanen innafor den nyare sjangeren “Testimonio”.

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## Introduction

“I fear that the conquered have always but a weak voice, which nobody hears...” (Don Mariano Alamar 67).

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s novel *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) is a historical romance that is set in California at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It describes the struggle over land between Californio landowners and Anglo-American squatters that occurred following the war between Mexico and the U.S, which ended in 1848 after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty was initially meant to protect the rights of the Californian population, but that quickly changed. In *A Different Mirror* (1993), Ronald Takaki says that the treaty had an article which “guaranteed protection of ‘all prior and pending titles to property of every description’” (167). The article that was supposed to ensure the protection of the Californio landowners was omitted from the treaty, and this caused a lot of trouble for the landowners, who had to “have their legitimate titles acknowledged in American courts” (Takaki 167).

The legitimization of titles turned out to be a slow process which induced squatters to settle on land which was waiting to be legitimized or had already been rejected. Thus, the annexation had a negative effect on the people of California, and, as David G. Gutiérrez says, the “Mexican population of the region was slowly but surely relegated to an inferior, caste-like status in the region’s evolving social systems (13). I have included article 8 from the treaty here, so that I can refer to it in the chapters to come. I quote at length:

Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or

disposing thereof, and removing the proceeds wherever they please, without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, tax, or charge whatever.

Those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall be under the obligation to make their election within one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty; and those who shall remain in the said territories after the expiration of that year, without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The character Don Mariano Alamar in *The Squatter and the Don* is one of the California landowners who suffer because his title has not been legitimized. He experiences a lot of heartache and financial strain due to Anglo-American squatters settling on his land. Mr. Darrel is such a squatter, and he has brought his family along to settle on Don Alamar's land. The reason why the Darrel family and other squatters are settling on Don Alamar's land and the fact that California has become part of the United States to begin with are both related to Manifest Destiny. In *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981) Reginald Horsman says that:

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<sup>1</sup> "Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; February 2, 1848" Article 8:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/guadhida.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp)

O’Sullivan first used the phrase Manifest Destiny in criticizing other nations for attempting to interfere with a natural process: other nations had intruded, he said, ‘for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions’ (219).

According to Manifest Destiny ideology it was the destiny of the Anglo-American people to annex California and to “overspread the continent” (Horsman 219). Horsman goes on to say that Manifest Destiny is based on notions of racial superiority: “The United States had developed in its own unique manner because it had been settled by members of a particular, superior race, a race with innate attributes making possible the creation of a free, ever-growing government” (226).

The squatters in *The Squatter and the Don* are part of this “superior race”: the Anglo-Saxons. They believe themselves to be superior to the Californios<sup>2</sup> and that is why (in their mind) they have the right to take Don Mariano Alamar’s land. The ramifications of these beliefs are evident in the novel, and when referring to the Californios one of the squatters, Gasbang says that “[t]hose greasers ain’t half crushed yet” (Ruiz de Burton 73)<sup>3</sup>. Even if some of the characters in the novel echo the sentiments in O’Sullivan’s writing—namely that the Anglo-Saxons are in fact superior, and that the Californios have to be “crushed” (73), this is not a conclusion that the novel supports.

That the squatters feel superior to the Californios in the novel has to do with existing stereotypes of the time when the *The Squatter and the Don* takes place, as Horsman says:

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<sup>2</sup> When I refer to the former Mexican landowners now annexed by the U.S I use “Californio”.

<sup>3</sup> All subsequent references from the novel are from. Ruiz de Burton, María Amparo. *The Squatter and the Don*. Eds. Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita. Huston, Texas: Arte Publico Press, 1992.

“The general Mexican population Thompson characterized as ‘lazy, ignorant, and, of course, vicious and dishonest’” (212)<sup>4</sup>. This description of the Mexican population is very different from the narrator’s description in *The Squatter and the Don*; here it is the squatters that are described as “vicious and dishonest”. Part of the explanation for this reversal is what Gutiérrez describes as follows: “considering themselves to be of inherently higher status than the Mexican working masses by virtue of their class standing...” and “their social ‘quality’ based on their supposed ‘pure’ European blood...” the upper-class Mexican-Americans did not want to be classified as Mexicans (32).

The description of some of the members of the Alamar family as blond and blue eyed, and the negative and stereotypical references to Native Americans throughout indicate that the novel is negotiating whiteness, and is perhaps more concerned with class than race. There is also a sense of Californio nationalism in the novel, but the text excludes the Native Americans and mestizos as part of this nationalism. I will discuss this in much more detail in chapter four.

The fact that Manifest Destiny and the newly initiated Americanization of California create new conceptions of race and social class, and restructure all of Californio society is evident in the novel. Capitalism and culture contact are important parts of this restructuring. The Californios are now governed by American legislation, which is causing especially the landowners a lot of problems, but even the Anglo-American squatters suffer from unjust legislation. For instance, if a piece of land that a squatter has located on is legitimately confirmed as Californio property, the squatter has to leave the home that he has built. Don Alamar says that “there have been cases where honest men have, in good faith, taken lands as squatters, and after all, had to give them up” (77). Hence, the novel goes beyond simply

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<sup>4</sup> Waddy Thompson, member of the Whig administration that travelled to Mexico in 1842. Published his *Recollections* in 1847 (Horsman 212).

blaming squatters and turns the blame towards unjust legislation and legislators, and corrupt business men.

There are not a lot of critical readings relating to *The Squatter and the Don*. In addition to the now mentioned sources, the most extensive text is the 1992 introduction to the novel by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, which covers issues such as race, gender, class, politics, etc. Notions of race and class are also discussed in David Luis-Brown's "White Slaves" and the 'Arrogant Mestiza': Reconfiguring Whiteness in *The Squatter and the Don* and *Ramona*" (1997), which focuses on "whiteness" in the novel relating to race and class. Notions of race are of course also often related to the concept of nationalism, and in his article "Romancing Hegemony: Constructing Racialized Citizenship in María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don*" (1996) John M. González discusses race and nationalism in relation to citizenship and genre. Other authors that discuss different aspects of the novel are Lene M. Johannessen and Melanie V. Dawson. In her book *Threshold Time* (2008) Lene M. Johannessen discusses disillusion and defiance in relation to the pedagogical lesson in the novel. Melanie V. Dawson's text "Ruiz de Burton's Emotional Landscape: Property and Feeling in *The Squatter and the Don*" (2008) focuses on sentimentalism and realism in relation to property and identity. In "'I Think Our Romance Is Spoiled,' or, Crossing Genres: California History in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don*" Anne E. Goldman discusses the novel in relation to the historical romance genre.

Initially, I was convinced that *The Squatter and the Don* was written from the perspective of the conquered Californios *against* the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Consequently, my study was supposed to explore how the novel negotiates this, but as I examined the novel in greater detail I discovered that this is not what it strives towards. What turned out to be more enriching for my reading was the process of figuring out how the novel

works, and what its objective, or agenda is. Hence, this thesis constitutes a genre study of *The Squatter and the Don*. While the novel is generally categorized as a historical romance novel, it posits a sort of unease in relation to genre that needs to be fully explored. This study will consequently add to some of Goldman's discussion, such as the use of parody, historical truth, and the importance of the reader. It will also explore issues that she does not really address, such as the importance of the narrator, and most importantly, what happens when we read the novel as testimonio. The novel has not, to my knowledge, been read as having a place within this particular genre.

*The Squatter and the Don* is a complex historical romance novel, and as Sánchez and Pita say, "demands a double reading, both as a romance and as a historical novel" (14). *The Squatter and the Don* functions as a historical romance novel, because in some ways it starts off as a typical historical romance, but after a while it does something different than what is characteristic of the genre. *The Squatter and the Don* is also first of all an *American* historical romance, and consequently the main focus of my first chapter will be on the novel's place within this tradition. I will look briefly into the tradition of historical writing, the American novel's tradition, and how the historical romance genre works. It is important to mention that the American literary tradition cannot be thought of as identical to European traditions, and that the main focus will be on the American literary tradition.

In *Fiction and Historical Consciousness* (1989) Emily Miller Budick says that "the American historical romances insist on the reality of history and society..." (ix). *The Squatter and the Don* is set in past history, and it gives detailed descriptions of the laws that were implemented and the events that took place at the time when the story is set. But it is not only a novel about struggle over land; it is also a story about love. It tells the story of Don Alamar's daughter Mercedes Alamar and Clarence Darrel and their romantic relationship. However, what sets the romance track in *The Squatter and the Don* apart from other romances

is that it can function as a parody. Hence, chapter 2 focuses on the use of parody in relation to romance in the novel, and the important function parody has in distancing the novel from other romance novels. This chapter adds to Goldman's discussion of parody, and will look more thoroughly into how parodic aspects are related to the reader's understanding of the text, and how these aspects are used to create an alliance between the narrator and the reader.

Despite the fact that there are several parodic scenes relating to the romantic relationships in the novel, the focus on "political corruption..." (Goldman 71) is more prominent. Pamela Regis says that one of the main goals of the romance genre generally is "presenting an ideal world..." (20), and herein is another tensions related to the novel and the genre: Both the characters and the narrator would disagree with calling the newly emerged society in the novel an "ideal world". Not even when Clarence and Mercedes are married do we get the sense that the novel has created an "ideal world", because the last chapter, "Out with the Invader," destroys any hope of a "happy ending". This is very much related to the narrator's voice. The narrator has an important function in the novel, and it is he/she who carries most of the historic track, and provokes the move away from the historical romance genre. Thus, Chapter 3 discusses the narrator's "manipulation" of the reader, and the fact that he/she has an agenda or a specific message that he/she want to convey: The narrator tries to change Anglo-American readers' perception of Californios, and wants to educate them in order to cause social reform. In this chapter I will also examine the narrator as a witness and the novel's claim to authenticity.

My first three chapters explore various aspects of the novel within the historical romance genre and looks at how the novel does and does not conform. Because of the novel's use of parody, the peculiar role of the narrator, and the importance of social reform, this allows me to consider *The Squatter and the Don* within a different and more recent genre—namely the testimonio. Thus Chapter 4 explores the importance of historical truth and the idea

of the narrator speaking on behalf of a community. My reading of the novel as testimonio may bring forth different sides to the text, such as for instance the text's insistence on social reform, and perhaps also allow me to make more sense of the narrator's voice, and the last chapter "Out with the Invader".

## **Chapter One:**

### ***The Squatter and the Don as Historical Romance***

In *The Historical Novel* (1963), George Lukács says that “[i]t was the French Revolution, the revolutionary wars and the rise and fall of Napoleon, which for the first time made history a *mass experience*, and moreover on a European scale” (23). The historical novel arose at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when a new sense of history emerged because of events such as the revolutionary wars. They were shared events which had a large effect on several nations throughout the world. Both the events that took place in Europe and the American Revolution had an impact on the American literary tradition, and they caused a questioning and exploration of notions such as nationality and national identity. Lukács observes that,

[t]he appeal to national independence and national character is necessarily connected with a re-awakening of national history, with memories of the past, of past greatness, of moments of national dishonor, whether this results in a progressive or reactionary ideology (25).

By looking back on the history of the nation one can try to find some denominators that can be classified as part of a national identity. There are characteristics that separate a nation from other nations, but also characteristics that unify: “the national element is linked on the one hand with problems of social transformation; and on the other, more and more people become aware of the connection between national and world history” (Lukács 25). That people were so concerned with national identity and history is one of the reasons for the rise of the historical novel as what Jerome de Groot describes “as a tool for self-definition...” (94).

We may note here that Lukács focuses on the important influence that the author Sir Walter Scott had on the historical novel's development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and emphasizes the influence that his novels had on the new European countries' sense of nationality, and the shared sense of European history that had emerged. It is also important to note that Scott's novels were read all over the world (de Groot 93-94), which meant that his novels had readers on the American continent as well. Scott's novels would be especially interesting to an American audience because, as de Groot suggests, his "works spoke to newly emergent independent nation states and allowed the site of the historical novel to be a crucible for the discursive formation of states and races" (94).

Since the United States was a fairly new nation the people had a need to explore and find their own national identity. The American Revolution resulted in American independence and this further encouraged the need to define the new nation separately from Britain. James Fennimore Cooper's novel *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821), takes place exactly where the separation of America and Britain also took place, and according to Emily Miller Budick this constitutes a "neutral ground". She says that "[i]t is the neutral ground itself, the particular place and time in the history of the nation when the English and the Americans battled for control" (5). It was on this "neutral ground" that Cooper and many other writers found materials for their historical novels. They discovered that it "represented politicization, ideology, and nonneutrality. It came into the world through a trauma of separation, a wrenching relocation of thought and feeling, that could not but issue in partisanship" (Budick 5). In order to create something solely American the American literary tradition had to separate itself from the British, but the "trauma of separation" and ambivalent space would however continue to influence the American literary tradition.

One of the differences between the United States' search for national identity and that of other European nations was the fact that it was a new nation without a long history.

America consisted of people from all over the world with different historical backgrounds and different cultures. Consequently, the American literary tradition would have a different development than the European: It wanted to “discover a new place and a new state of mind” (Richard Chase 5). This new nation consisted of different states with different histories, and that meant that even if the American historical romance novel was influenced by Scott’s novels, the themes and issues it discussed were taken from history and life locally in America. In *The American Historical Romance* (1987), George Dekker argues that: “Inspired by Scott’s affectionate, indeed patriotic, evocations of the scenes and manners of Old Scotland, American historical romancers turned to the histories of their own states and regions for the matter of their fiction” (62). The historical novel then became a tool where the American literary tradition found a way to focus on typically American themes, types, settings etc.

What further characterized the newfound sense of American history and nationalism was, as Anders Stephanson puts it, that it “took the form of a structure of feeling shared by an ‘imagined community’ rather than any explicit ideology. What one shared was a sense of an entirely new kind of country, uniquely marked by social, economic, and spatial *openness*” (28). One difference between the American sense of nationalism and history and the European was consequently that the latter “emphasized permanency and continuity, a glorious past of a homogeneous nation in ancestral lands; and it supported the mythology by cultivating a whole corpus of putatively ‘ancient traditions,’” (Stephanson 28). The United States did not have “ancient traditions” which meant that there were a lot of contradictions and negotiations taking place also in the literary tradition. Chase observes that “much of the best and most characteristic American fiction has been shaped by the contradictions and not by the unities and harmonies of our culture” and that when this fiction “attempts to resolve contradictions, it does so in oblique, morally equivocal ways” (1).

Chase's use of the word "attempts" indicates that the American novel may not always succeed in resolving these contradictions, and he goes on to suggest that this is because as D. H. Lawrence observes, the American tradition has its own way of dealing with them: "the American novel has usually seemed content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize, the remarkable and in some ways unexampled territories of life in the New World and to reflect its anomalies and dilemmas" (Chase 4-5). Thus, the American novel can be said to concentrate more on the search for answers, rather than the actual conclusion, and this also makes "many of the best American novels achieve their very being, their energy and their form, from the perception and acceptance not of unities but of radical disunities" (Chase 6-7). We could conclude and say that what makes the American literary tradition different is the fact that it accepts radical disunities, and celebrates their exploration.

Related to this aspect are other, equally important elements that separated the American novel from the European. One is that the "American novel, in its most original and characteristic form, has worked out its destiny and defined itself by incorporating an element of romance" (Chase viii). Hence, romance is one of the most important and common features that we find in the American novel's tradition. Even if the American tradition sprang from the European, Chase observes that it differed "by its perpetual reassessment and reconstitution of romance within the novel form" (viii). I will return to the aspect of romance specifically later.

*The Squatter and the Don* can be read a historical romance novel, which means that it is retrospective looking, as the genre is. We see that the character Don Mariano Alamar has a tendency to look back on how society used to be and wish that everything could have stayed the same. An example is when there is a double wedding in the family, and the Don learns that the couples do not want to have a traditional Californio celebration: "Don Mariano was kind and affable to all, but many days passed before he became reconciled to the fact that the marriage of his two children was not celebrated as his own had been, in the good old times of

yore” (123). He grieves for the traditions and the times that are gone, but he accepts that society is changing. Dekker observes that: “For the action of historical romances often turns on the failure of a character or class to understand that attitudes and behavior recently appropriate and tenable are so no longer” (15). In *The Squatter and the Don* it is however not that the Californios do not understand or try to adapt to the progress that has been brought to California, their ethnicity prevents them from participating and adapting to society.

Historical romance novels contain important historical events and often contemporary political commentary, in addition to the usual romance characteristics such as: “The quest journey, the hero’s trial, and his eventual marriage to the king’s daughter...” (Dekker 26). This is what makes historical romance novels so different from other genres; the historical romance novel is in a way constructed by opposites. It is a genre that presents historical facts, historical events, political commentary, but simultaneously it presents a fictional romantic plot that builds upon and tries to create some sort of “closure and resolution...” (Sánchez and Pita 14). In some ways the romantic plot in *The Squatter and the Don* tries to reconcile the political differences, but simultaneously the political and historical part of the novel works against this reconciliation. Again, the best example of this is the Don himself, who in many ways tries to hold on to the past, and fights for the Californios traditions. He realizes that some changes have to be made and tries to reconcile the differences between the Californios and the squatters. He proposes that the squatters can keep their land on the condition that they fence it in, and he suggests that they should plant fruit instead of grain. The Don is willing to help them financially and give them plenty of time to pay him back, charging no interest. In many aspects *The Squatter and the Don* adheres to the “check-list” of a historical romance, but what it does *not* do is to “reconcile political and historical issues” or create some sort of resolution. This element is very important for the text and I will return to it in detail later on.

What further sets *The Squatter and the Don* apart from other typical historical romance novels is the subtitle of the novel: *A novel descriptive of contemporary occurrences in California*. This subtitle indicates that what happens in the novel is more of a comment on the present, and not something that was only relegated to history. The novel starts off in the past with the description of society in California after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but gradually it becomes more and more contemporary of the time that Ruiz de Burton wrote the novel. It is set in the past but it serves as a comment on contemporary California. The novel can also be said to function in a pedagogical way, because, as Elisa Warford suggests, the narrator “is constantly aware of her readers and seeks to educate them about the plight of the Californios and to persuade them to take action against the injustices the Californios suffered at the hands of the US government...” (5). In other words, the narrator is using the past as an argument for why changes should be made in the present. My discussion of this aspect first and foremost focuses on the narrator as agent for such pedagogy.

In *The Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (2007), Gregg Crane says that to him, the “most important formulations...” of “the nineteenth-century historical romance’s preoccupation with national identity” is “the frontier romance, the plantation idyll, and romance of race and republicanism” (38). *The Squatter and the Don* both draws on, and contradicts parts of these three formulations. The frontier romance for instance “identifies the American people as Anglo-American in origin and culture” (Crane 39) and tries to enforce the belief that “[t]he land must be settled, and the Indian must be vanquished” (Crane 40). In some ways *The Squatter and the Don* does not abide by this perspective, it is a novel written from the conquered’s perspective and a novel that tries to stop settling on Californio land. American historical romance novels have often tended to focus on notions of westward expansion and progress, and to “be more than commonly skeptical about the blessings of

progress, more than averagely honest about the cost of epic colonizations and revolutions” (Dekker 42). This is what *The Squatter and the Don* comments on. The novel seems to be arguing against the progress emerging, as a consequence of Manifest Destiny, but more specifically it is critical of what Manifest Destiny caused the Californio elite and of the new capitalist society that emerged because of its ideology. The novel is not against progress or Manifest Destiny per se, because we learn that the Californios are hoping for a railroad that will bring more business to San Diego, but it is against corruption and unjust legislation that demote the Californios from their position as elite. As a historical romance drawing on the frontier element *The Squatter and the Don* only partially agrees with the typical elements there.

The novel also draws from what Crane calls “the plantation idyll” (38). These stories are typically set in past history and focus on a lost community and a former way of life: “one of the emotional payoffs of the historical romance is its bittersweet celebration of a world that once seemed to be timeless but which has been overcome by the tides of change” (Crane 54). As we saw, *The Squatter and the Don* celebrates the Californio past, and argues that this past is much better than the present state. The society that Don Mariano describes and longs for in the novel is gone; it is being destroyed by the new American capitalist society. Plantation idyll can also be linked to what Vincent Perez terms “hacienda memory;” he says that “hacienda society” was a society “in which the accumulation of money was not the primary raison d’être and where, as the Californios believed, human relations had not yet been corrupted by modern (commercial) values” (52). Evoking feelings of nostalgia, sense of loss, and the destruction of a (in the Californios’ mind) perfect community, the novel *can* be seen as anti-industrialist. *The Squatter and the Don* draws from hacienda memory but only parts of the novel are set in the past, and the novel becomes more and more future oriented—which indicates that the novel is not anti-industrialist. What is evident is that the novel is much more

focused on a possible future than a nostalgic past. The novel needs to show, as Warford says, “that the Californio culture is capable of survival in a capitalist system and that US prejudice and government corruption are at the root of their problems...” (9).

The Don is a symbol of the past, and in many ways anti-industrialist, but he also tries to adapt considering that he has no choice if he wants to participate in this newly emerged society. Perez does not term the whole novel as anti-industrial, but he does argue for the importance of hacienda memory, and goes on to say that *The Squatter and the Don*:

...mirrors seigneurial-based anti-industrialist discourse in southern plantation narratives a body of writing that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also questioned U.S economic and political institutions. Much as plantation narrative remembered the “organic” southern agrarian community to counter northern capitalist dominance, Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo’s works both invoke claims to pre-bурgeois seigneurial (Mexican) society as a means of contesting injustice under U.S rule and the intrusion of modernity into their native region (50).

The novel does draw from such narratives, in order to show how the U.S government and corrupt business men destroyed a (in the Californios mind) better way of life, but as I return to in chapters 3 and 4, essentially the novel is more concerned with the future.

The novel moreover serves in a way that lets the Californios “find solace by remembering the pre-capitalist Mexican hacienda world. But they also depend on silencing of memories that would complicate their project to recover the hacienda as a symbol of Mexican and American origins and identity” (Perez 50). This silencing of memories is found in plantation romances where the memories of the slaves are silenced, and do not explicitly mention that “the elite’s social status depended on a coerced, subjugated and exploited labor force to work the land—slaves in the South and Indian/*mestizo* peons in California...” (Perez

51). This is exactly how Californio society in the *The Squatter and the Don* functions, too: we learn that the Alamars have several Indians who work for them, but they are hardly ever mentioned, and when they are, they are presented as stupid and lazy. For instance when Darrell and Don Alamar fight, a couple of Indians come to watch and Victoriano tells them to go away: “This rebuke and imperative order silenced them immediately, and not understanding why these gentlemen were having all that fun, and did not laugh, nor wished any one else to laugh, quietly turned and went home” (250). In this scene, the Indians are portrayed as animals, almost like monkeys—jumping around, screaming and laughing, and being disciplined by their owner.

The novel silences the Indians, because there is no mention of the fact that the Spaniards originally took their land. The narrator and the characters only see the mistreatment that the Anglos have caused *them*, “forgetting” their own history of mistreatment. To the Californio characters this past of taking land and mistreating the Native Americans is insignificant because the Indians are (in their mind) unintelligent people who have to be controlled, while the Californios are an intelligent people who cannot possibly be compared to Indians. To the Californios in the novel, the exploitation of Indians is part of their “perfect community” and related to their “hacienda memory”. An example is when the Don is reminiscing and explaining the system of land-ownership in California before the annexation, saying that the land-owners “also employed Indians, who thus began to be less wild” (176). To him, employing or exploiting Indians is in the Indian’s best interest, because then they are “less wild”. The novel not only uses hacienda memory to present a people or a way of life that is gone, this is also a way of negotiating and presenting the Californio people and race to a broader audience. By describing Californios as proud, intelligent, sophisticated, kind, and white, the narrator consequently argues for the whiteness of the Californios and that they belong among the upper-class of society.

Even if part of the novel is set in a “perfect community”, or what Perez calls a “pre-capitalist Mexican hacienda world” (50), i.e. a world where they also kept slaves, this does not mean that the novel longs for a world without industry or capitalism. It is also important to keep in mind what Warford says:

While critics today often classify *The Squatter and the Don* as historical romance, to do so tacitly acknowledges that the question was already moot at the time of the novel’s publication and robs it of its rhetorical purpose, casting it as elegy or nostalgia rather than as social reform fiction (6).

Warford’s comment can be connected to another feature that makes *The Squatter and the Don* different from other historical romance novels of the time. As Pita and Sánchez say, “it is not written from the perspective of the conquerors with the usual portrayal of a ‘backward’ people constrained by an outmoded feudal order and unable to cope in the modern post-feudal state” (6). In this novel the narrator instead presents us with the point of view of a conquered but sophisticated, and intelligent people. The most common heroic figures in contemporary American historical romances were “energetic, kind-hearted, moral, virtuous, Protestants in opposition to the Spanish, Catholic villains presented as being greedy, despotic, lazy, cruel, treacherous and immoral” (Sánchez and Pita 7). Ruiz de Burton sets out to contradict the stereotypes of the time, and separate the Californios from the rest of the Mexican population. Sánchez and Pita assert that in the novel this results in the negative stereotypes that existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century being “subverted and partially inverted: the Mexicans or Californios are presented as superior in both intellect and culture, in contrast to the Anglos...” (7). For instance, when Mercedes and Elvira Alamar travel to New York and are presented to George’s aunt, Mrs. Mechlin, she is thrilled with them, saying that “I know I shall be proud to present my beautiful niece to New York society. Her manners are exquisite. She is lovely. She will be greatly admired, and justly so” (190). The aunt is extremely

impressed by the beauty and manners of the Californios and wants to show them off in high society. Mercedes acquires several admirers among Mrs. Meclins' acquaintances—both Mr. Arthur Selden and Bob Gunther are captivated by her. Mr. Arthur Selden says, "I never saw any woman so beautiful in all my life..." (193), but unfortunately for Arthur and Bob, Mercedes does not reciprocate their feelings. As Arthur's mother comments: "I am sorry for Arthur if he is in love with that girl. I fear he will never get over it" (194).

*The Squatter and the Don* is also different from many of the romances of "race and republicanism" that Crane discusses. He says that:

Turning the world upside down was precisely what certain novelists had in mind, and they produced counter-romances recasting national identity not as a matter of blood but as a fulfillment of the egalitarian and democratic aspirations of the American Revolution (60).

*The Squatter and the Don* focuses on the Californios' Spanish descent in order to distance them from the Indian and mestizo population, and to argue for their whiteness and elite status. Hence, the novel does not want to turn "the world upside down", rather it strives to maintain a status quo where the Californios keep their position. Egalitarianism here is only relevant as far as the Californio relation to Anglo is concerned.

Franco Moretti observes that the historical novel is very much related to the notion of borders, both external and internal ones. The external borders are borders between "state and state; and internal ones, within a given state" (Moretti 35). Even though his discussion concerns the European novel, it is also relevant to the borders in *The Squatter and the Don*. They are internal borders that could be said to "focus on a theme which is far less flamboyant than adventure, but much more disturbing: *treason*" (Moretti 37). The novel does not focus on the borders between California and the rest of America, but rather on what was promised

before the annexation of California, and what it actually resulted in. The theme of treason in the novel pertains to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a direct result of Manifest Destiny. As we saw, the treaty was supposed to protect the land and the rights of the Californios, but because it was amended, the Californios lost the rights they had been promised. There are several scenes in the novel where the Californios and even some of the Anglo-Americans describe the treason that the United States committed and the anger that they feel. Don Mariano says: “It ought to have been sufficient that by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo the national faith, the nation’s honor was pledged to respect our property” (174-175). He feels betrayed and tricked by the United States government, and goes on to say that, “[h]ere we are, living where we have lived for fifty or eighty years; the squatters are turned loose upon us to take our lands, and we must pay taxes for them, and we must go to work to prove that our lands are ours before the squatter goes” (176). The Californios express a lot of anger at the squatter’s throughout the novel, but they recognize that it is the government that is really to blame.

The Californios recognizing that it is actually the government’s fault can be related to borders, for as Moretti says: “Historical novels are not just stories ‘of’ the border, but of its erasure, and of the incorporation of the internal periphery into the larger unit of the state: a process that mixes consent and coercion—Love, and War; Nation, and State—” (40). Moretti argues that the (European) historical novel’s intention is to erase the borders that have been created. If we bring his perspective over to a reading of *The Squatter and the Don* this becomes a complicated process. What Moretti describes as the erasure of borders does not comply with the American literary tradition, because as I have mentioned earlier, the American tradition did not usually try to reconcile or erase, but rather explore contradiction. *The Squatter and the Don* also differs from the American tradition in this manner, because more like Moretti’s argument, the novel tries to erase borders rather than explore.

Another way in which *The Squatter and the Don* tries to erase borders is through the romance: The novel being set in a past of hacienda memory means that the text “provides a genteel space for the flowering of romantic unions between Californio and Anglo, figuring the possible integration of the (“Spanish”) Californio elite into the new (white) American social order” (Perez 72). Looking back at the past, and presenting the Californio point of view, the narrator shows the audience a solution to the problem, and contradicts Californio stereotypes. The narrator uses intermarriage to reconcile Californios and Anglo-Americans, and to establish a new social order where the Californios are perceived as equal to Anglo-Americans—consequently erasing borders. The narrator does this by demonstrating to the reader that the past is now gone, and that the Californios are willing to adapt to the new capitalist society. That the Don buys land for the railroad indicates that he is trying to fit in, and be part of the new society. The problem is not that the Californios do not want to take part; it is that they are losing their rights and their status in society that is causing resentment. Gabriel Alamar for instance becomes a hod carrier, and is suddenly seen as an Indian or mestizo in the eyes of his surroundings. This is illustrated in the scene where Gabriel falls down a ladder and is brought to the hospital. On the way there the wagon carrying Gabriel is intercepted by another wagon: “‘he is a hod carrier who fell down and hurt himself. I suppose he’ll die before he gets to the hospital,’ said the driver, indifferently, as if a hod carrier more or less was of no consequence” (348). The driver of the intercepting wagon thinks that they should be allowed to go first, since the other one is only carrying a hod carrier, and not a man who belongs among the elite.

Gabriel working as a hod carrier serves as an example of what happened to many, and what could happen to all Californios. But despite the fact that some are losing their social status, and that parts of society disappear, the marriage between Clarence and Mercedes indicates that there are ways that Californios can survive as an elite in the new capitalist

society. Sánchez and Pita claim that: “*The Squatter and the Don*, like all romances, textualizes a quest which necessarily involves conflict and resolution, given here as the trials and tribulations standing in the way of the felicitous union of a romantic couple” (5). This is in part true, but what is more complicated is the notion of a “resolution”. On the one hand, the union of Mercedes and Clarence functions as such, because their union is a way in which the Californios can retain their position within the upper-classes, keeping their whiteness.

Warford says that:

After Don Mariano dies, his wife and children leave behind their feudal rancho, which is ‘too full of sad memories,’ and embrace an urban, market society (332). In this way, Ruiz de Burton departs from historical romance to argue that the Californios are well suited to capitalism and are not caught hopelessly in the past, doomed to vanish, as they are depicted in other fiction of the time (8).

The death of Don Mariano and the Alamars having to leave the family rancho symbolize the death of a past age and the erasure of borders, but even if the novel tries to erase borders and resolve the conflict, it does not succeed. More than anything else, what makes this novel different from other historical romance novels is ultimately that even if it is set in the past, it is more focused on the future, and it does not succeed in any sort of resolution. As Warford points out, the narrator does not want to go back in time, but is using the past to prove something about the present: “She is not lamenting an already bygone people; she is calling for reform of a still-current problem” (Warford 9). The narrator argues that the Californios belong with the elite in the newly emerged capitalist society, while simultaneously remembering the past and using it as an argument for the wrongs that befell them and what is owed them in the present.

A final reason why it is so difficult to know what the novel actually does and where it belongs has to do with the narrator. The novel is filled with the narrator's own comments and opinions, many of them are very strict and opinionated, but others are filled with irony. The first are mostly related to the society and politics in the novel, and are used as tools to convince readers of the injustice that has befallen the Californios. They are meant to enrage and perhaps touch the readers into some sort of action on behalf of the protagonists. The ironic and often humorous comments, on the other hand, pertain to the romantic plot and can be read as parodying the historical romance novel. The genre was very popular at the time when *The Squatter and the Don* was published, and by making parts of the novel parodic the narrator may be trying to create an alliance with the reader.

Even if *The Squatter and the Don* does not conform to all of the characteristics of the historical romance genre that does not necessarily mean it cannot be defined as such. We need to keep in mind that: "every single literary work ought to be recognized as a unique aesthetic utterance, carrying its own unique aesthetic meaning" and that genres can be seen as what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "form-shaping ideologies," (qtd. in Jostein Børtnes 195). Parody is one aspect that contributes to the "aesthetic meaning" of *The Squatter and the Don*, and this is what the next chapter will focus on.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Romance and Parody: “Shared Space of Understanding”**

It is a beautiful morning in San Diego, Clarence and Mercedes are sitting on the front porch of the Alamar house. Clarence says to Mercedes: “Does the sweetest thing that God created realize that this day is the first of September?”, Mercedes is embarrassed by his “exaggerated praise,” but he continues to compliment her, calling her the “loveliest rosebud and the prettiest hummingbird...” (239). The scene is an example of the sort of language and dialog that the lovers use throughout *The Squatter and the Don*, and it makes the discourse sound both exaggerated and humorous. This is related to the double reading that the novel demands, both as a historical novel and as a romance (Sánchez and Pita 14), because it is only the explicitly romantic part of the novel that uses this sort of discourse. In this chapter I use the term *romance* when referring to “the narrative of falling in love, with all of the obstacles, hesitations, failures, and delays that heighten tension and make the eventual consummation of the love relationship (whether physical or emotional) triumphant, or its absence cataclysmic” (Susan Strehle and Mary Paniccia Carden xiv). I will give some background to the plot and some of the romance’s typical traits before I explore the role of parody in relation to the romance.

What we could call the romance part in *The Squatter and the Don* revolves around the courtship between Clarence Darrell and Mercedes Alamar. They fall deeply in love after their first meeting, and their feelings for each other continue to grow throughout the novel. At first the obstacle or barrier to their relationship is Doña Josefa’s and Mercedes’s sister’s belief that Clarence is a squatter. As Carlota says, “[b]ut a squatter! The idea of an Alamar marrying a squatter! For squatters they are, though we dance with them...” (125). In their opinion being a squatter is the same as being a thief because it implies that you take land that rightfully

belongs to someone else. When Doña Josefa discovers that Clarence and Mercedes are in love she tries to separate them by sending Mercedes to New York, but she is unsuccessful. After a while Doña Josefa learns that Clarence is not a squatter after all because he actually bought his land from the Don, and upon learning this she finally gives Mercedes and Clarence her blessing. When everything seems to be going so well for the young couple Clarence's father learns of his son's land purchase, and becomes furious: "The old man trembled with suppressed anger, so much that he could not fasten on his spurs, and this only increased the more his senseless rage" (246-247). Mr. Darrell is not able to control his temper and tries to hurt Don Mariano with a whip, insulting both the Don and his family. This fight combined with other misfortunes, causes years of separation between Clarence and Mercedes.

The obstacles that Mr. Darrell and Doña Josefa pose for the two young lovers are related to what we can call the formulaic structure of the romance genre. Pamela Regis identifies "eight narrative events" that typically characterize a romance novel (30):

Eight narrative events take a heroine in a romance novel from encumbered to free. In one or more scenes, romance novels always depict the following: the initial state of society in which heroine and hero must court, the meeting between heroine and hero, the barrier to the union of heroine and hero, the attraction between the heroine and hero, the declaration of love between heroine and hero, the point of ritual death, the recognition by heroine and hero of the means to overcome the barrier, and the betrothal. These elements are essential (Regis 30).

*The Squatter and the Don* conforms to the check-list that Regis describes. The novel opens with a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Darrel about what Regis calls the "initial state of society" (30). They are discussing their lives, and their plans for the future, and Mr. Darrell explains his point of view, saying: "We aren't squatters. We are 'settlers.' We take up land

that belongs to us, American citizens, by paying the government price for it” (57). Mr. Darrell wants to go to San Diego to locate on the Don’s land, and is trying to convince his wife why he has the right to do so. Their discussion of the conflict between squatters, land owners, and the government is a way in which the text introduces the reader to the conflict and debate that continue throughout the novel, and it is also this conflict that causes the obstacles and barriers for Mercedes and Clarence. A couple of chapters following this discussion and introduction to the “initial state of society” the Darrell family has located on the Don’s land and we learn about the first “meeting between heroine and hero” (Regis 30): Clarence comes to visit the Alamar family’s ranch, Mercedes is chasing her dog and is about to fall when Clarence catches her; “a change in their expression flashed instantaneously, and both felt each other tremble, thrilled with the bliss of their proximity” (98). They are immediately attracted to each other—love at first sight, and so their romantic journey can develop through the remaining six narrative events that Regis describes above.

Most of the characters in the novel are also similar to characters from other romance novels; Mercedes for instance “is the typical ‘angel’ of romance...” (Sánchez and Pita 45). Contemporary readers of *The Squatter and the Don* would be quite familiar with the most common characters in romance novels and the formula these novels structured themselves around. This would also cause them to have certain expectations when reading a new romance novel. *The Squatter and the Don* conforms to most of the characteristics, but there are also ways in which it does not. This is a method the text uses in trying to achieve its goal, namely to influence and change the Anglo-American perception of Californios, propose a solution to the conflict in the novel, and also cause social reform. The Californios want to keep their position in society as elite landowners and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo actually stated that they would keep their positions. Article 8 in the treaty says:

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States<sup>5</sup>.

The novel can in fact be seen to function as a parody of the romance genre because there are several examples in the novel of the ways the novel mocks or exaggerates aspects associated with romance. Several critics have discussed the parodic aspect in *The Squatter and the Don*, one of them is Anne E. Goldman, who says that the novel “critiques the linguistic “amiability” of the genre as a whole” and the way the romance novel’s “mellifluous cadences mask sordid realities” (75). I would like to explore further what the parodic aspects actually do to the text, and why they are important in convincing readers why Californios belong among the elite. I will suggest that the tension that is created between the romance genre and its parody represents a strategy with which the text tries to manipulate the reader. In the remainder of the chapter I will look at various ways in which this tension may be accomplished.

A standard definition of parody can be found in M.H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, which says that:

A parody imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject (36).

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<sup>5</sup> [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/guadlida.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadlida.asp)

In *The Squatter and the Don* there are several instances where the characteristics of a romance novel appear to be mocked or exaggerated. For instance when Clarence leaves his home because of a huge quarrel with his father, his sister Alice is so upset that she becomes ill “with a raging fever, and when daylight came, instead of the fever passing off, as Mrs. Darrel had hoped, she became delirious” (282). Alice becoming seriously ill almost exactly as Clarence leaves their home seems bizarre and unlikely, but the romance novel is often associated with fainting, blushing and very emotional characters. As Simon Dentith suggests, parodies

...seize on particular aspects of a manner or a style and exaggerate it to ludicrous effect. There is an evident critical function in this, as the act of parody must first involve identifying a characteristic stylistic habit or mannerism and then making it comically visible (32).

In this case overstating Alice’s emotions to the point where she is delirious is a clear case of parody in the sense Dentith indicates.

However, even if the novel amplifies some of the aspects normally associated with romance novels it still follows the formula associated with the romance genre. This is possible because it can actually “preserve the very forms that it attacks” (Dentith 37). One of the ways in which parody preserves the romance form is how the romance plot follows the standard structure of a romance novel’s formula. *The Squatter and the Don* consequently reads as an actual romance novel even if some of the genre’s characteristics are parodied. The romance plot is what drives the novel forward, allowing the text to achieve its goal.

It is, as mentioned, in the dialogues that we find most of the parodic elements in this novel, and there is one scene where the characters seem to self-consciously parody the romance genre. This is when George Mechlin tells Mercedes that Clarence is in fact not a squatter, because he actually owns the land he has located on. To this George comments: “It

isn't half so romantic to love a plain gentleman as to love a brigand, or, at least, a squatter" (141). In this scene George makes the idea of the typical genre hero sound ridiculous and laughable. The reason why "to love a plain gentleman" would not be as romantic is because the heroes of romance novels are usually not portrayed as plain gentlemen; they are instead often mysterious and sometimes even evil. If one compares the honest and decent Clarence Darrel with famous characters such as Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847), Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), or Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Clarence seems far less interesting. He continues to tease Mercedes and says, "[r]eally, I think our romance is spoiled. It would have been so fine—like a dime novel—to have carried you off bodily by order of infuriated, cruel parents, and on arriving at New York marry you, at the point of a loaded revolver, to a bald-headed millionaire!" (141). That the characters in this manner mock the typical romance hero is connected to what Linda Hutcheon calls "backgrounded text". She says:

When we speak of parody, we do not just mean two texts that interrelate in a certain way. We also imply an intention to parody another work (or set of conventions) and both a recognition of that intent and an ability to find and interpret the backgrounded text in its relation to the parody (22).

The examples of iconic romance heroes and novels presented above can be said to represent backgrounded texts that have to be recognized in order for both the characters and readers to be able to understand the humor in George calling Clarence a "plain gentleman".

George's comment is also one way *The Squatter and the Don* uses irony to distance itself from other romance novels. Hutcheon says that "[a] critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony" (32). Irony is an important element in parody and it "is the major rhetorical

strategy deployed by the genre” (Hutcheon 25). Parody does not necessarily have to be humorous, but in this case the use of irony and exaggeration in dialog, and the extreme emotions that the characters experience make the novel so. There are many examples of parody in Clarence’s discourse, and even his declarations of love and devotion to Mercedes become so. One example is when he says, “[h]ow could I wish to go anywhere and leave you; I would not go to heaven, if to do so I would have to renounce you” (131). Claiming that he would choose not to go to heaven if he had to give her up sounds ridiculous and exaggerated, and contributes to making certain features of the backgrounded text “comically visible” (Dentith 32).

Parody can also be recognized in the narrator’s comments; for instance when Mercedes receives a letter from Clarence the narrator tells us that: “Mercedes kissed the letter, and cried over it, of course, as women must...” (355). This scene could have been perceived as very sad, but because the narrator comments “as women must” it becomes parodic instead. In fact, many of the narrator’s comments mock the usual portrayal of women in romance novels. Another good example is when the narrator describes Mercedes sitting on the train thinking about Clarence: “Mercedes took her hat and gloves and cloak off, and sat at the window *to enjoy* her misery in a thorough womanly fashion” (167). That Mercedes would in fact “*enjoy* her misery,” and the narrator saying that this is in accordance with what he/she calls “womanly fashion” gives reason to believe that the narrator is mocking the romance genre. I return to the narrator specifically in the next chapter, for now let me just say that the narrator has an important and complex role in the text, which further complicates the generic identity of the novel.

As mentioned, by parodying the romance genre the author distances herself from the common expectations of the genre, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, these expectations are related to notions of freedom and reconciliation. It would be difficult to

imagine Ruiz de Burton writing an idealized story about the downfall of the Californio elite, because she herself belonged to that particular group. However, when the text serves as a parody, and as a proposition of some sort of resolution to the exclusion of the Californios, it is easier to imagine. Referring to Josephine Clifford McCrackin, Goldman says that: “Time and time again Anglo American writers use ‘the shimmer of romance and poetry’ as a foil for the drudgeries and commercialism of the Gilded Age, a means of enjoying the rustic pleasures of Californio life—represented, of course, at the safe remove of the past” (77-78). This is one of the aspects of the romance genre *The Squatter and the Don* creates distance to. The text criticizes the way Anglo writers typically presented “the rustic pleasures of Californio life” and Californios as part of a romanticized past. The author seems to suggest that when the Americans came to California they brought destruction and pain to the Californios, and argues that Anglo writers such as Helen Hunt Jackson were now trying to hide it under “the shimmer of romance and poetry”. Distancing itself through parody the novel underlines the author’s perception that the Californio elite is not part of a romanticized past, but of the present. The author does not want readers to only think of the Californios in relation to a romanticized past, she tries to show her readers that Californios still exist and that they belong among the Anglo-American elite now settling in California.

The critique of the contemporary romance does however not necessarily mean that the text rejects the whole genre itself, for the author can have “a critical and an admiring attitude to his/her ‘target’ or ‘model’ (Margaret A. Rose 28). Even if the author seems critical of the typical romance novel because of the use of irony and exaggeration, one must keep in mind that the author has in fact chosen this particular way of writing in order to achieve his or her goal. The author of *The Squatter and the Don* is obviously very invested in her message to the reader – namely the reconciliation and integration of the Californios with the Anglo-American elite, and this corresponds with one of the objectives of the romance genre, in other words to

achieve reconciliation or a “closure and a resolution” (Sánchez and Pita 14). Regis is an advocate of the romance novel’s resolution, and throughout her book she argues against critics who claim that the ending in marriage “enslaves the heroine, and, by extension, the reader” (9). She goes on to quote Rachael Blau DuPlessis who says that “[a]s a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest... [and] incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success” (9-10). I agree to some extent that the ending in marriage does “repress” the quest, and when relating this to *The Squatter and the Don* we see that it is important for the novel to propose intermarriage as a “happy” solution, and that this intermarriage in some ways achieves “narrative success”. Readers may be satisfied when a romance novel reaches reconciliation such as a happy marriage, but in the case of *The Squatter and the Don*, the ending in marriage is not enough to conclude that the novel ends happily. I will discuss this in more detail further on, but I would like to suggest here that what binds, or “enslaves” its readers is the formula of romance, because it creates expectations that have to be followed in order to be considered a romance. In relation to *The Squatter and the Don*, the notion of binding the reader is immensely important when it comes to the text's agenda. If the text succeeds in binding its readers it has a greater chance of influencing or “controlling” its reader.

A second aspect of the critique implied in the parodic aspect is the Californios’ and the text’s negotiation of whiteness. The Californios do not want to be perceived as “colored” or in any way associated with the conquered in for instance Frontier romances, because some of these romances enforced the belief that, in short “land must be settled, and the Indian must be vanquished” (Crane 40). Unlike this, *The Squatter and the Don* tries to convince the reader that the Californios are *not* a backward people, even if they are the conquered, and that they are in fact quite similar to Anglo-Americans. The novel negotiates whiteness in several ways, and the negotiations are closely related to the portrayal of heroines. There is a lot of emphasis

on and repetition of the fact that the Californios have blue eyes, and especially Mercedes. When George, Elvira and Mercedes leave for New York, the girls are sad to leave their family, and George says to Mercedes: "Look here, this won't do; this will spoil our blue eyes..." (130). Not long after their departure George mentions her blue eyes again, saying: "I am a Christian gentleman and will not see savage torture inflicted on my blue-eyed *hermanita*" (138). The repeated reference to Mercedes' blue eyes seems unnecessary, but might be essential in order for the text to succeed in convincing readers of the Californios' whiteness.

Another way the novel negotiates whiteness is through what we can call the characters' nervousness. Towards the end of the novel Clarence leaves Mercedes, and she is very upset. To this George comments, "[s]he has fainted only. We will soon restore her to consciousness. Don't be alarmed. I think the parting with Clarence has nearly killed her—but she is alive..." (280). There are several instances where the women's emotions and nerves take over and they feel sick or faint. This not only functions as a parody of the typical characters in romance novels, because it is also related to contemporary afflictions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jennifer S. Tuttle states that: "In 1869, American neurologists George Miller Beard coined the term 'neurasthenia' to denote this depletion of nervous energy; the terms 'nervous weakness' and 'nervous prostration' were also used frequently to refer to this nerveless state" (58). James Mechlin in *The Squatter and the Don* experiences this nervousness because of "a too close application to business" (Tuttle 58), and has settled in California because the climate makes him better. Tuttle goes on to say that "Beard expressed alarm at what appeared to be a disturbing increase of 'American nervousness' among the elite, those white, privileged, professional classes of Americans living in the northeastern cities..." (58). It is important to note that it is not only the Anglo-Americans in the novel who experience such nervousness, but many among the Californios as well. Mercedes is one of the characters that suffer the

most from this affliction, and when Clarence leaves her, she is so emotional and unhappy that it “nearly killed her—but she is alive” (280). It takes Mercedes a very long time to recover after Clarence leaves, she is feverish and she even experiences hallucinations. That the characters suffer in this manner can be read as a strategy for showing whiteness. The affliction makes them similar to the Anglo-American elite, proving that they are not that different from them, and that they also belong “among the elite, those white privileged, professional classes of Americans” (Tuttle 58).

The reasons for distancing through parody involve changing the Anglo-American perception of Californios, because the novel tries to show that the Californios are not part of a romanticized past, but belong among the elite. An example of how the text tries to achieve this is when we learn what Mercedes likes to read. She is distracted by Clarence and does not pay attention to anyone else: “‘Mercedes’ French novel must be very interesting,’ Carlota said. ‘It is not a novel—it is French History,’ said Madam Halier” (120). This could be read as the text showing that the Californios are educated people who read history and not superficial French novels (perhaps such as romance novels). In many ways the author tries to create an alliance between the narrator and the audience. Here I would like to return to the scene where George comments on how to love a plain gentleman would not be as romantic, because the characters’ understanding and mockery of the romance genre is related to the reader’s perception of them. It is in the interest of the text to describe the Californios as smart, not only concerned with romantic notions but also realistic ones. George’s claim that it wouldn’t be “half so romantic to love a plain gentleman” (141) underlines that the Mechlinns and the Alamars have the same values and sense of humor, and one can speculate that if readers appreciate the parody they also share the characters’ understanding.

As mentioned, for a parody to even be recognized as a parody, the reader has to know the text or texts that are being parodied. This is related to what Rose argues for in

*Parody//Meta-Fiction* (1979), where she says, “[f]or in evoking the expectations of an audience, parody involves the audience and the tradition of the literary work, its synchronic and diachronic roles, in its criticism” (53). The romance formula allows *The Squatter and the Don* to achieve its objective of reconciliation and the novel ends in the happy reunion and marriage of Mercedes and Clarence. Clarence is thrilled to see Mercedes after they have been so long apart, saying “Mercedes, my own, my sweet wife...” (357). The novel’s ending coincides with the reader’s expectations of romance novels, for, as Regis says, “a marriage—promised or actually dramatized—ends every romance novel” (9). Mercedes and Clarence are happily married and their union is clearly supposed to represent the union between the state of California and America, a proposed solution to the Californios’ situation. They belong and should be part of the elite in the newly emerged society, and the romance genre allows the text to propose intermarriage as a solution.

The author wants her audience to support her solution of intermarriage, and that is why she orchestrates an alliance between the narrator and the white audience. This alliance is based on the narrator’s and audience’s shared understanding and perception of whiteness. It is the reader’s recognition of the romance genre through the use of parody that creates this trust and understanding. The narrator tries to win the audience’s trust and respect in order to convince them that intermarriage will benefit everyone. The proposed resolution is however also what makes this novel stand out from other romance novels, because the ending in marriage is not really an ending but merely a suggestion of one. Usually, “[f]or a protagonist in a romance novel, courtship is the central concern, and consequently the reader’s as well” (Regis, “Female genre fiction” 849), but in *The Squatter and the Don* the historic track conquers the romance track. As Sánchez and Pita argue: “Romance invites a closure and resolution that the historical narrative rejects” (14). I return to this aspect in greater detail in the next chapter.

To conclude this chapter I would like to mention that there are also other ways the novel uses irony and humor to achieve its agenda. One example is when Clarence and Hubert are discussing stocks, and Clarence explains to Hubert why Mr. Darrell dislikes stocks: “He is terribly down on mining stocks. He would consider me next to a thief if he thought I bought stocks” (107). That Mr. Darrell would consider Clarence a thief for buying stocks is ironic when considering that Mr. Darrell is a squatter and has located on the Don’s land. Clarence paid for his stocks, while his father does not want to pay the Don for his land. There are several instances in the novel where irony is used to show that the squatters are doing something morally wrong when taking the Don’s land. Another example is the fight between the two squatters Mathews and Romeo. Romeo locates on a piece of land that Mathews claims belongs to him, and Mathews says: “I think it is a mean performance on your part, too, coming here to steal a march on me” (86). That he is so furious and uses words like “mean” and “steal” is bizarre because Mathews himself has been “mean” and “stolen” the Don’s land. This use of irony and parody in the novel is, as mentioned, ways in which the text tries to create an alliance with its readers. A further important factor in developing this relation is the narrator, because it is through the narrator that we learn everything that goes on in the novel, and the narrator’s role in the text is also an important reason why the historic track overpowers the romance. This is the main focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter Three:

### The Role of the Narrator

“It seems now that unless *the people of California take the law in their own hands*, and seize the property of those men, and confiscate it, to re-imburse the money due *the people*, the arrogant corporation will never pay” (366).

This is a quote from the last chapter in *The Squatter and the Don* and it reflects the voice that leads the reader through the text—the narrator’s voice. I have read *The Squatter and the Don* several times and tried to decide on the identity and implied gender of the narrator, but I have not come to any conclusion. Sánchez and Pita also struggle with identifying the gender of the narrator concluding that:

The interconnection of both public and domestic discourses throughout the novel would allow for either a male or a female narrative voice, as what is clear is that the narrator moves equally at ease in the various domains, although conscious of the gender constraints of each (49).

That we cannot identify the gender of the narrator, and that the narrator can be both male and female, does not mean that he/she is of less value to the text; he/she is actually of immense importance, and can even be referred to as a sort of main character. In this chapter I explore the significant function that the narrator has in *The Squatter and the Don*.

To establish authority is important for the narrator because he/she wants to convince readers that they should trust and agree with him/her. An example of how he/she establishes such authority is the reference to the many laws and legislative texts that are presented in the novel, as for instance: “With date of February 14, 1872, the Honorable Legislature of California passed a law ‘*To protect agriculture, and to prevent the trespassing of animals*

*upon private property in the County of Los Angeles, and the County of San Diego, and parts of Monterey County.”* (80). This law helped squatters because “every owner or occupant of land...” (80) could take the cattle they found on their land. This brings about much difficulty for the Californios in the novel, because many of the squatters refuse to fence their land and they gladly shoot the Don’s cattle when it enters their property. It also gave rise to a lot of problems for the Californians who actually lived in 1872, and by quoting real-life legislation from the period, and then illustrating the consequences these have on the characters in the novel, the narrator claims authority through historical accuracy which in turn fuels the authenticity of the text.

The author’s aim is to touch, infuriate, and make readers sympathize with the Californios, because she wants to change society, and it is through the narrator that Ruiz de Burton achieves this. There are several instances where the narrator tries to make us sympathize with the Californios; one example is when he/she comments on the building lots that several of the characters bought:

They bought block after block of building lots, and only stopped when their money was all invested. Clarence also bought a few blocks, and George and Gabriel risked all they dared. Many other people followed this (which proved to be disastrous) example, and then all sat down to wait for the railroad to bring population and prosperity (122).

The characters in *The Squatter and the Don* buy property in San Diego because they have been promised a railroad—The Texas Pacific. If the railroad is built they will make a lot of money, but the plans to build are suddenly canceled. Many of the characters who invested in these lots are suddenly bankrupt and we learn what caused this situation. By saying “which proved to be disastrous”, the narrator shows us that the characters bought these lots in good faith, but just because of certain rich corrupt individuals who only care about money, they are

ruined. Don Mariano, Mr. Mechlin and Mr. Holman try to talk to the Governor about building the railroad: ““There will not be any Texas Pacific?” said Mr. Holman. ‘No, not in California,’ the Governor calmly asserted, passing over the subject as of no consequence, if a hundred San Diegos perished by strangulation” (314). The narrator functions as a witness to these events, and it sounds as if he/she is speaking on behalf of the San Diego community when he/she reflects on this “—the railroad—which filled the minds and hearts of all the San Diego people, absorbing all their faculties and all their money” (231). The narrator’s reference to “all the San Diego people” is related to the reality of these events, because the cancellation of the plans to build the Texas Pacific actually happened, and it is important for the narrator to make this clear. It was not something that only befell the characters in the novel, but something that caused the whole San Diego community a lot of problems. The narrator consequently functions as a historical witness to real as well as fictional events.

The narrator in *The Squatter and the Don* is third person omniscient, and it is he/she who tells us everything that happens in the novel such as the characters thoughts and emotions. Having an omniscient narrator automatically establishes some sort of authority, because the narrator controls every aspect of the text, and in this case he/she also tries to control our perception of the text. The text’s perspective is important, and is related to Gérard Genette’s essential question of “*who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*” (241). These questions are connected to the term “focalization” which: “refers specifically to the lens through which we see characters and events in the narrative” (H. Porter Abbott 73). It is the narrator who speaks, but it is the focalizer who sees. The narrator in *The Squatter and the Don* is also the text’s focalizer—and he/she is an external focalizer because he/she is not a character or participant in the text (Patrick O’Neill 86). Given the role of *The Squatter and the Don*’s narrator as historical witness, in addition to being the author’s main instrument for conveying the agenda, it is not surprising that he/she is the focalizer in this sense.

The narrator knows all the character's thoughts and also their past and their future. He/she is not an actual character or participant in the narrative, but rather a witness. This is not a witness who only relates what happens in the novel, but also expresses his/her own opinion on different matters. Patrick O'Neill refers to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan who observes that the focalizer's vision "is by no means limited to physical vision, but can also include psychological and/or ideological components" (86), this also describes the narrator in *The Squatter and the Don*. The narrator-focalizer in *The Squatter and the Don* tries to make readers adopt his/her views—because it is the narrator that we have "vision with" (Mieke Bal 265). Focalization then, is important for a text because it "can contribute richly to how we think and feel as we read" (Abbott 74). Making the narrator's opinion known relates to the novel's message that he/she wants to convey to the reader, and one can go as far as saying that the novel in fact tries to force a certain point of view upon the reader. The author's choice of an external focalizer is consequently important because, as O'Neill states: "we tend to read the norms of internal focalization as questionable, those of external focalization as authoritative" (87).

Having an omniscient narrator also gives the author a high level of freedom in her writing, since the narrator can move between issues and characters at will. He/she can also turn the narrating voice outward, to the reader directly, such as for instance when Mercedes is sitting on the train thinking about Clarence leaving on another train. Here the narrator comments: "What would you, my reader? She was so young—only seventeen—and in love. The poor child was naturally indulging in all sorts of foolish fancies while looking at the woods through which he had disappeared" (166). Using vocatives such as "you" and "my reader" the narrator tries to reach the audience directly and create a sort of bond. In the specific example just mentioned the narrator's comments also serve to show the universality of youth and romance.

Having a focalizer who expresses his/her own opinion is significant also in creating a shared understanding. This is closely related to the alliance between narrator and audience that was discussed in the previous chapter. The narrator seems to want readers to adopt the same point of view as him/her, as for instance when there is a discussion of the Huntington letters. Here the narrator comments:

The process began about that time and it has continued up to this day, this very moment in which I write this page. Mr. Huntington's letters have taught us how San Diego was robbed, tricked, and cheated out of its inheritance. We will look at these letters further on (172).

As Sánchez and Pita say: “the authorial voice intervenes throughout the novel to interject strong moralizing editorial comments...” (49) and this is also part of how the narrator tries to manipulate the reader. The use of collective personal pronouns is a strategy by which the narrator claims that he/she, the characters, and the reader all have a shared perception of what is right and wrong. In some ways he/she leaves the reader no choice in making up his/her own opinion because he/she is signaling on behalf of everyone what is morally correct. Hence, we can say that the narrator tries to speak on behalf of a community.

The narrator’s apparent investment in his/her message is confirmed by the many scenes when discussing the Huntington letters. These letters were written from Collis P. Huntington, one of the members of the so called “Big Four”, a group “which first formed the Central Pacific Railroad Company of California” (Sánchez and Pita 27) to an associate called Colton. The letters were used as evidence in the trial, also referred to as the “Colton suit”, against the Big Four. The “Colton suit” ended in 1885, and the letters exposed the illegalities and corruption of the Big Four (Sánchez and Pita 27-28). In the last chapter the narrator expands on the Huntington letters:

Mr. Huntington in his letters (made public in the Colton suit), shows the truth of all this; shows how bribing and corrupting seemed to him perfectly correct. He speaks of “the men that can be *convinced*” (meaning the men that will take bribes), as naturally as if no one need blush for it. And with the same frankness, he discloses his maneuvering to defeat the Texas Pacific Railroad...(366).

It was these “men that can be *convinced*” that stopped the Texas Pacific Railroad from being built. The narrator’s voice seems agitated and angry because he/she knows how desperately the Californios needed the railroad, as we hear for instance in this passage:

It was reserved for Mr. Huntington to familiarize the American people with the fact that an American gentleman could go to Washington with the avowed purpose of influencing legislation by “*convincing*” people with money or other inducements, and yet no one else lose caste, or lose his high social or public position, but on the contrary, the *convinced* and the *convincer* be treated with the most distinguished consideration (144).

The tone of this quote not only sounds angry, but is also filled with irony that signals the ignorance and naïve thinking of the American people. We know that Mr. Huntington did not “familiarize” the people with this voluntarily—it was first revealed in his letters presented in the Colton suit. This is related to what Hutcheon calls the “marking of difference through irony...” (52). The narrator’s use of irony here shows us that the American people have been naïve and ignorant in trusting supposed American gentlemen who are in fact entirely corrupt. It is also a way of distancing both the reader and the narrator from such morally corrupt people, and the way these criminals are treated by society. Irony, in this example, has both a mocking and serious effect, because by mocking, the narrator also makes more clear what people have done wrong—namely trusting the corrupt people, in this case the Big Four. To

convince the reader even more of the injustices related to the Texas Pacific Railroad the narrator presents several excerpts from the real Huntington letters to further support the historical accuracy of the text: “In another letter Mr. Huntington says: ‘I had a talk with Bristow, Secretary of the Treasury. He will be likely to help us fix up our matters with the Government on a fair basis’” (367).<sup>6</sup>

The narrator knows everything that is going on in the novel, and one might consider his/her comments about what is going to happen as ruinous for the novel, because why should we continue to read if we know the outcome? Fortunately, it is mostly in relation to facts and actual history that the narrator explicitly tells us what is going to happen, but there are also instances where the comments are used to create excitement, or a desire to read on. One example is when we learn that the “appeal taken by the squatters in the Alamar grant, against Don Mariano’s title...” (65) has finally been dismissed, and the Don’s title is approved. The narrator then asks the reader: “would the squatters vacate now? We will see.” (210). The question creates a desire to discover what actually happens, because we have already learned that many of the squatters cannot really be considered honest gentlemen.

The narrator is central to the historic track because he/she is the one who carries it. The proof that is put forth on behalf of the Californios and the anger that the narrator expresses is part of why the romance track is conquered. When George and Elvira are discussing the railroad that is supposed to be built, the narrator says: “They were not the only couple who in those days pondered over the problem of the ‘*to be or not to be*’ of the Texas Pacific, which *never came!*” (298). The tone of anger in the last phrase “which *never came!*” and the narrator’s disclosing of the outcome of the railroad debate (which had the same ending in history as in the novel), is one of the reasons why the historic track conquers the

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<sup>6</sup> This is an accurate extract from the Huntington Letters. Can be verified at. *Pound by Pound*: <http://helvena.wordpress.com/2012/04/23/some-more-tid-bits-of-history-people-should-know/>

romance. The facts of history that readers are presented with and the passion that the narrative voice employs to present his/her arguments dominate the text in such a way that the romance sort of disappears, or is put in the background.

The narrator appears to be a witness and not an actual participant in the novel, but he/she is a witness who is also emotionally involved. Showing us his/her own feelings is important in order to touch and create sympathy in the reader, and the narrator does this by *not* distancing him/herself from what goes on in the novel. One example is when Don Mariano dies and everyone is sitting around his bed: “For some moments no one believed that his lofty and noble spirit had left the earth, but when the truth was at last realized, the scene of grief, of heart-rending agony, that followed would be impossible for me to describe” (329). This supports my suggestion that the narrator functions as a witness, because he/she is grieving the loss of Don Mariano as much as the other characters. This is also a way the narrator tries to convince the reader of the reality of these events. In a historical sense Don Mariano’s death could be seen as symbolizing the heartache and grief that so many Californios experienced as a consequence of squatters and the fact that the railroad was not built.

The narrator also tries to convince us of his/her authority or to convince the reader that he/she can be trusted by referencing and quoting important thinkers and writers such as Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Dickens, Joseph Addison etc. If the narrator establishes authority as a witness, this invites a relationship of trust with the reader, which is further supported by these interspersed quotes. In the chapter “At the Capitol” there is a long sequence where we are presented with comments on quotes from both Addison and Carlyle. Addison’s quote goes:

There is no greater monster in being than a very ill man of great parts, he lives like a man in a palsy, with one side of him dead; while perhaps he enjoys the satisfaction of luxury, of wealth, of ambition, he has lost all the taste of good-will, of friendship, of innocence, (206).

This forms the background for discussing lawgivers' morals, and as we saw, in relation to the railroad that was not built—many of the involved parties were more interested in making more money than in helping others: “they wish to absorb all the carrying business of this coast—in fact, all sorts of business—they want money, money, money” (310). The text establishes its own moral superiority through quotes and arguments put forth by well-known thinkers, because these thinker's arguments support the arguments and agenda of the text itself.

“At the Capitol”, is however confusing because it is difficult to determine whether it is the characters or the narrator who speaks. In the following example, for instance, it seems as if it is the narrator telling us about and discussing the laws and lawgivers: “If only the *lawgivers* could be made to reflect more seriously, more conscientiously, upon the effect that their legislation must have on the lives, the destinies, of their fellow-beings *forever...*” (207). However, this discussion ends with the *narrator* saying: “These were George Mechlin’s thoughts as he sat, with his uncle, in the gallery of the House of Representatives, listening to a debate, a few days after their arrival in Washington” (207). The reason why the passage seems more like a speech given by the narrator than as George’s thoughts is because of the quotations. It seems unlikely that George would think “in quotes”, and the questioning comments that follow them can be recognized as the narrator’s voice: “And if these law-givers see fit to *sell themselves* for money, what then? Who has the power to undo what is done? Not their constituents, surely” (207). These lines seem to be spoken to someone, and

we can only infer that it is to the reader, further supporting the idea that this in fact the narrator's voice.

The narrator's voice dominates and controls every aspect of the text, even the characters' thoughts. Saying that it is only "George Mechlin's thoughts" is not convincing because the narrator's arguments and angry voice that the reader by now knows seeps through. This is connected to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "double voiced discourse,". He says that:

...in the narrated story and in parody the other person's discourse is a completely passive tool in the hands of the author wielding it. He takes, so to speak, someone else's meek and defenseless discourse and installs his own interpretation in it, forcing it to serve his own new purposes (197).

Even though Bakhtin discusses the author, his comments are still relevant to the example from *The Squatter and the Don*, because here the narrator forces his/her own interpretation on to George's thoughts. The narrator's voice seeps through because he/she needs every aspect of the text to reflect the agenda and messages of the text. Saying that it was George's thoughts is a way the narrator tries to cover up his/her own voice.

Another example of such confusion between the narrator's and the characters' voice can be recognized in the chapter "A False Friend Sent to Deceive the Southerners" which starts off with a quote from Carlyle: "Great Men are the Fire Pillars in this dark pilgrimage of mankind; they stand as heavenly signs, ever living witnesses of what has been, prophetic tokens of what may still be—the revealed embodied Possibilities of human nature..." (304). Carlyle argues that humans have the possibility to be exceptional—and can be role models for all, but after Carlyle's quote follows a discussion of these "Fire Pillars" specifically in relation to California: The "Fire Pillars" of California are the monopolist. They cannot be perceived as

“heavenly” sent: “Unfortunate California! If thou art to follow such guides, thy fate shall be to grovel for money to the end of time...” (304). The monopolists are described as the worst kind of people and representing the worst part of human nature; they are presented as scum—completely unworthy of controlling or having anything to do with business in California. They are entirely different from the ideal “Fire Pillars” that Carlyle presents; consequently, if the Californios were to look up to them they would end up “groveling for money”.

This discussion ends with the narrator saying: “Yes, alluring, tempting, making rapacity and ill-gotten wealth appear justifiable, seen through the seductive glamour of success! The letter Mr. James Mechlin would receive one morning about the latter part of November, 1875, would seem so to indicate” (304). Here, as in the example with George’s thoughts, the narrator tries to hide or cover up his/her own voice behind someone else’s, in this case that of a letter, but is unsuccessful because of the tone of the discussion. Because the narrator is also the novel’s focalizer it is easier for us to recognize his/her voice and arguments since we have become familiar with it. The narrator can consequently be said to function as a “ghost” that haunts every aspect of the text, because he/she moves from characters and scenes as he/she pleases. The focalizer is the one that chooses what readers are allowed to learn and what must be kept from us—he/she chooses when and where the lens should zoom in or out

There is also another voice that can be heard in the novel, namely that of Ruiz de Burton’s close friend Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo (1808-1890)<sup>7</sup>, who also suffered and fought for his landownership. While working on his memoirs he wrote to a friend saying “the history will come out and it will be as you’ve heard me say many times, the truth impartially written

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<sup>7</sup> Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo came from a prominent Californio family, and he had an important role as a landowner. He had influence both in society, politics and the military. “New Perspectives on the West”: [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s\\_z/vallajo.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s_z/vallajo.htm)

so it can serve posterity as a guide” (Ibid qtd. in Genaro M. Padilla 90). Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo was an influential man because of his land, but also because of the different political and military offices he had held in California (Padilla 77). He was not against separating the state of California from Mexico and he “supported a short-lived rebellion led by his nephew, Juan Batista Alvarado, that led to the proclamation of California as a ‘free state’” (*New Perspectives on the West*). His discourse can be recognized in the narrator’s discourse, but also in the characters Don Alamar’s and Doña Josefa’s. Towards the end of the novel, when Doña Josefa is discussing the injustices caused by monopolists with a friend, she says: “Oh, very well, let it be so. Let the guilty rejoice and go unpunished, and the innocent suffer ruin and desolation. I slander no one, but shall speak the truth” (364). Doña Josefa does not want to pretend that the monopolists are good people only because they are rich and powerful, when they contributed to the destruction of the life she used to lead. As mentioned above, telling the truth about the history of the Californios was very important for Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, and this is also reflected in Doña Josefa’s insistence on speaking the truth.

Criticizing people who only concern themselves with making more money is another similarity between Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo and some of the voices in *The Squatter and the Don*. Vallejo missed: “a world of civility and kinship...” which “had in the new American society, hardened into an obsession with getting and hoarding money” (Padilla 80). This reflects some of the sentiments regarding the Big Four presented in the novel: They have earned their millions by robbing others; Doña Josefa says: “She knew that among men the word BUSINESS means inhumanity to one another; it means justification of rapacity; it means the freedom of man to crowd and crush his fellow man...” (363). After her husband’s death she expresses a lot of anger at the monopolists and their way of doing business.

As we saw in my previous chapter it is vital for the agenda of the text to present the Californios as intelligent and “white”, and the narrator is also important for the negotiation of

whiteness. Already in the novel's second chapter, when we first learn of the Don, the narrator says, “[t]hat his meditations were far from agreeable, could easily be seen by the compressed lips, slight frown, and sad gaze of his mild and beautiful blue eyes” (64). It is not only the descriptions of the Don's eyes or physical appearance that are used to negotiate whiteness. Another example can be found only a few pages later, when the narrator says: “The well-balanced mind and kindly spirit of Don Mariano soon yielded to the genial influences surrounding him” (68). This description paints a picture of an intelligent and thoughtful man whom everyone adores and respects. These character descriptions are important, because the text tries to convince readers that the Californios are equal and maybe even superior to Anglo-Americans.

The narrator also negotiates the Californios' whiteness by setting them apart from people of “color”. This is done by establishing differences between the Californios on the one hand, and on the other, —Indians, and African Americans, in terms of both intelligence and interests. As mentioned earlier, Mercedes is not interested in romantic stories—she likes to read French history. The Darrell's servant Tisha, on the other hand, is very concerned with the love life of people around her. She sees that both Clarence and Mercedes, and Victoriano and Alice, are very much in love, and the narrator comments that she was—“nodding her head to the rows of preserves and pickle jars, in sheer exultation, for there was nothing so interesting to Tisha on the face of the earth as a love affair” (181). This makes Tisha sound very superficial in comparison to the problems with the railroad and squatters, which many of the other characters are concerned with. One has to note here that Tisha is the Darrell family's servant and she needs not be interested in their problems. Portraying the servants as ignorant is however a way the text creates distance between the “ignorant servant class” and the “intelligent upper class”. The Indians in the novel are also, as mentioned, described as “stupid” and “lazy”, and there are several instances where the narrator refers to them as such.

For instance when the narrator is telling us about the squatter John Hogsden who gambles with Indians, we read that Indians,

...were too fascinated to see how plainly John was robbing them. Pitilessly would John strip his unsophisticated tattooed comrades of everything they owned on this earth. Their reed baskets, bows and arrows, strings of beads, tufts of feather-tips, or any other rustic and barbaric ornaments (332).

The use of loaded words such as “unsophisticated”, “rustic”, and “barbaric” signals the narrator’s perception of Indians: He/she sees them as simple, almost like animals, both in relation to intelligence and their way of life. None of the Indians in the novel are described as intelligent or depicted in any positive way.

Negotiating whiteness is not the only factor when it comes to the narrator’s description of the characters, and consequently the reader’s perception of them. It is also vital for the narrator to show us who is “good” and who is “bad”. All of the Californios in the novel are “good” characters who can do no wrong, but many of the squatters, such as Gasbang and Hogsden, are what we can call “bad” or evil characters. They are portrayed as sly, mischievous, and selfish, whose only goal is to acquire the Don’s land no matter what it takes. To succeed they hire the worst kind of person, the attorney Peter Roper. When Clarence first meets him on the boat to San Diego, Roper lies: He claims that he knows Clarence’s father because he wants to be introduced to Clarence’s mother, his sisters, and the Holman ladies:

It was a matter of perfect indifference to him that Mrs. Darrel would find out his falsehood afterward. All he wanted now was to become acquainted with the Darrell and Holman ladies. In this he succeeded, and what is more, succeeded according to his principles, in utter disregard of truth or self-respect (110).

Roper has no respect or regard for others; it seems that everything he does has to benefit himself. Roper's actions make him out as an awful person, but is not only the characters' actions which indicate their "bad" nature, even some of the descriptions of the characters' appearance indicate that they are "bad", such as for instance: "The broad, vulgar face of Gasbang, with its square jaws, gray beard, closely clipped, but never shaved, his compressed, thin, bloodless lips, his small, pale, restless eyes and flat nose..." (71). Such loaded language makes it easy for the reader to distinguish between "good" and "bad" characters, and because of the characters' actions and the narrator's not so subtle descriptions of them, the reader is almost manipulated to adopt the same perception.

The only character who might be considered something in-between "good" and "bad" is Mr. Darrell. He is a nice man; his only problem is his pride and stubbornness which cause both him and others a lot of heartache. After discovering that his wife and Clarence purchased the Don's land behind his back, Mr. Darrell throws Clarence out of his house and separates from his wife. Even though he misses his wife and son terribly, his pride prevents him from asking forgiveness until finally Clarence returns to the Alamar farm. On the day of Mercedes' and Clarence's wedding he finally asks for forgiveness: "A wrong legislation authorized *us squatters*, sent us, to the land of these innocent, helpless people to rob them. A wrong legislation killed the Texas Pacific, and such legislation is the main cause of the Don's death. But I, too, helped the wrong-doers" (358). Mr. Darrell consequently turns out to be a "good" character whose only wrong doing is to trust in American legislators and legislations.

In many ways the narrator can be said to have a didactic function because he/she tries to teach the reader what is right and what is wrong. Mr. Darrell is one of the characters who changes in the novel, because he sees the truth and repents. One can say that Mr. Darrell is a sort of stand in for the reader, because the narrator seems to be speaking to a misinformed audience, hoping they too will see the truth and repent. Consequently, Mr. Darrell functions

as an exemplar a “model” (*OED*) for the reader—and this further supports the central role he has in the narrator’s design to teach the reader.

One might argue that the novel ends when Doña Josefa says “I slander no one, but shall speak the truth” (364) because what follows is the last chapter in the novel, titled “Out with the Invader”. This chapter stands out from the rest of the novel because it functions as a sort of explanatory chapter revolving around the narrator’s own reflections and accusation—directed now at the American government. It also reads as his/her plea for the reader to take action. Doña Josefa saying she will only speak the truth’ in a sense introduces this chapter, since here, the narrator is free to speak his/her mind without interference from the action in the novel proper. The romance track has here come to an end, and the characters in the novel are not even mentioned; only the narrator is left. His/her voice is angry and committed as he/she addresses the reader:

They came before the Government at Washington, and before the people of California, as suppliant petitioners, humbly begging for aid to construct a railroad. The aid was granted most liberally, and as soon as they accumulated sufficient capital to feel rich they began their work of eluding and defying the law (365-366).

The narrator is referring again to the monopolists and the Texas Pacific Railroad and is clearly very angry at both the “moneymonger” monopolist who sabotaged the railroad, and the American government for allowing them to do so. He/she seems to be speaking directly to the latter, pointing out its flaws and instructing them on what to do: “Our representatives in Congress, and in the State Legislature, knowing full well the will of the people, ought to legislate accordingly” (372). The narrator feels that the people are not being heard, and in this chapter he/she is speaking on behalf of all “the people” of California and at the same time urging readers to take action against these injustices. On the last page in this chapter the

narrator addresses the reader by name, saying: “And what price did the monopoly pay for these lands? Not one penny, dear reader” (372).

As, stated in the beginning of this chapter, the narrator can be seen as a main character, because of his/her important function in the novel, but as the preceding discussion makes evident, his/her role is perhaps better described as witness. He/she does not participate directly in the novel, but as mentioned, still tries to control every aspect of the text—including the reader’s interpretation of events. He/she is able to zoom inn and out of the different aspects in the novel, and decide which one we are presented with. Everything from character descriptions to quotes from important thinkers are in the narrator’s control.

## **Chapter Four:**

### ***The Squatter and the Don* as Testimonio**

The narrator in *The Squatter and the Don* does not participate directly in the novel, but still tries to control every aspect of the text—including the reader’s interpretation of events. He/she is able to zoom inn and out of the different aspects in the novel, and decide which one we are presented with. Everything from character descriptions to quotes from important thinkers are in the narrator’s control. Thus, I would like to discuss the narrator’s role in relation to yet another generic aspect of the novel, namely its categorization as testimonio, which has not been discussed in much detail by others. Consequently, I have to return to some of the points discussed in the previous chapters, such as the narrator as witness, the characteristics of the historical romance genre, and *The Squatter and the Don* as “social reform fiction” (Warford 6).

The very first lines in *The Squatter and the Don* are: “To be guided by good advice, is to profit by the wisdom of others; to be guided by experience, is to profit by wisdom of our own...” (55). The novel’s author María Amparo Ruiz de Burton has the wisdom of experience with regard to California, and she tries to share that wisdom with readers in order to guide them. I would like to argue that Carlyle’s “Fire Pillars” mentioned in the previous chapter can be linked to the novel as a whole, because the chapters in *The Squatter and the Don* can be seen as: “ever living witnesses of what has been, prophetic tokens of what may still be—the revealed embodied Possibilities of human nature...” (304). Writing a novel about the history of the Californios is a way of documenting and putting forth evidence of the past. Both María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and her friend and model for the novel’s Don Mariano Alamar, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, fought for their own rights, but also those of other Californios’, especially when it came to questions of landownership. Vallejo saw the importance in writing

down Californio history in order to preserve it, but also to present what he believed to be the truth. He agreed to write down his memoirs so that others could learn from them:

For nearly two years, between April 1874 and November 1875, Vallejo worked steadfastly with Cerruti on his memoirs, the two often writing while traveling between Sonoma, Santa Clara, San José, and Monterey collecting Spanish colonial and Mexican California documents, encouraging other Californios to dictate their personal narratives as well as contribute their papers (Padilla 84-85).

It was important for many Californios to have their history written down after the war, and it probably pleased Californio readers to read texts written by their own. I would like to add that the concept of testimonio existed before the 1960s as well, also in relation to Californio texts. The Bancroft Library for instance, terms both Vallejo's and other Californios' memoirs "testimonios": "These 'Bancroft Dictations' (also known as 'Testimonios' or 'Recuerdos') provide an important counter narrative to traditional histories"<sup>8</sup> (The Bancroft Library). What makes *The Squatter and the Don* as testimonio different from testimonios such as Vallejo's memoirs is that the novel is also fictional. The novel is not a dictation of someone's firsthand experience, but rather functions in a way that lets fictional characters and experience illustrate the hardship of a whole community. Hence, we cannot say that *The Squatter and the Don* is parallel to the "Bancroft Dictations" because it is a historical romance novel with fictional characters, but it does build upon the actual history of the Californios to an extent that cannot be ignored. It is important to remember that Ruiz de Burton was a Californio who lived and experienced the laws and the political situation that is described in the novel,—and it can therefore be seen as a "document of early, local California history" (Lene M. Johannessen 61).

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<sup>8</sup>The Bancroft Library. Western Americana Collection.  
<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/westernamericana.html>

The novel can be said to serve as evidence—a way of proving the wrongdoings of the American government. The narrator, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a narrator-witness, and he/she is the one who presents the reader with evidence such as excerpts from different historical documents to argue his/her case. John Beverly says that: “The word *testimonio* translates literally as testimony, as in the act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense” (14). The narrator in *The Squatter and the Don* is a narrator-witness and he/ she is “bearing witness” and putting forth evidence on behalf of the Californios through his/her committed and sometimes even angry voice, which indicates that the narrator is personally involved. Even if, as Beverly reminds us, testimony arrived “as a new narrative genre in the 1960s...” (Beverly 13) and *The Squatter and the Don* was written at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the novel carries enough characteristics of testimonio that we may consider it as such. Beverly continues his definition of the testimonio as follows (I quote at length):

...a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a “life” or a significant life experience. *Testimonio* may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, *novela-testimonio*, nonfictional novel, or ‘factographic literature’ (12-13).

*The Squatter and the Don* draws from several of the genres that Beverly refers to, such as autobiography, eyewitness report, life history etc. Despite the narrator in *The Squatter and the Don* being a third-person omniscient witness (for the most part) and not a first-person—the novel can still be considered some variant of testimonio. George Gugelberger and Michael

Kearny claim that what makes testimonial literature different from other colonial literature is that it “is produced by subaltern peoples on the periphery or the margin of the colonial situation”, and testimonio then, is not written from the prevailing “centers of global power” (4). They go on to argue that up until the 1960s colonial literature “served the cultural hegemonic needs of empire building by seeping into the ideological state apparatus of the educational systems, one of the main guarantors of the preservation of the system(s) in power” (4). Testimonial literature is the direct opposite of this kind of literature, because it functions in a way that allows the people, or the conquered, to declare their versions of history, and historical truth.

*The Squatter and the Don* is written from the “margin of the colonial situation”, that of the conquered Californios, but what complicates the identification of *The Squatter and the Don* as testimonio is the novel’s generic characteristics as a historical romance. The testimonio typically has a “nonfictional character...” (Beverly 18), while the historical romance has a fictional one. The novel includes fictional characters and events, but it also presents facts of history, which means that it is not completely fictional. Gugelberger and Kearny define the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1959) by Chinua Achebe’s as an early testimonio, and assert that the novel gives “us a fictional account of real life...” (5). This is also what *The Squatter and the Don* does—it describes real life through fictional characters, and as my previous chapters suggest, *The Squatter and the Don* is more “nonfictional” than “fictional” because the historic track conquers the romance. I would like to add that when the novel was first published it was published “under the pseudonym ‘‘C. Loyal.’ The ‘C.’ stood for *Ciudadano* or ‘Citizen,’ and ‘Loyal’ for *Leal*, i.e. *Ciudadano Leal*, a ‘Loyal Citizen,’” (Sánchez and Pita 11). This corresponds to the fact that this novel is written for the “people”, in this case the “people” being only the Californios.

When looking at *The Squatter and the Don* in relation to the definition that George Yúdice posits, the novel fits right in: He says:

Following the studies of Barnet (1969, 1981), Fornet (1977), González Echevarría (1980), and Casas (1981), testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.) (17).

We sense that the narrator-witness in *The Squatter and the Don* is a Californio, and because of the “urgency of a situation”—in this case the situation in California, he/she needs to tell the story in order to motivate social reform. The narrator does not approve of the contemporary situation in California, especially the transgressions of squatters, monopolies, and an untrustworthy government. The narrator wants to infer change—resulting in a committed voice that is easily recognizable in the novel, and there are several instances where the narrator sounds angry—consequently the idea of the narrator being “*moved*” into telling the story is fitting. The chapter “Out with the Invader” supports my reading of the novel as testimonio, because here, the narrator speaks directly to the reader, relating the current situation and the need for social reform. In addition to this chapter, features of testimonio also surface intermittently but only in the narrator’s discourse.

Yúdice refers above to “authentic narrative,” and pertaining to this are, as we saw previously, the laws and different historical documents that are presented in the text. The authenticity of the text establishes historical truth, and truth is an important element in testimonio: “Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history” (Yúdice 17). This refers back to María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s and Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo’s need to tell the truth of California and the Californios’ history, in order to set “aright official history”.

What further distinguishes testimonio from other literary genres is that the narrator is speaking on behalf of the many: “The situation of the narrator in *testimonio* is one that must be representative of a social class or group...” (Beverly 15). The narrator in *The Squatter and the Don* does not give us reason to believe that he/she is acting on his/her own behalf, but rather acting on behalf of a whole community—namely the Californios. Testimonial literature furthermore functions as a “*collective* struggle against oppression from oligarchy, military, and transnational capital” (Yúdice 26). *The Squatter and the Don* is written from the conquered and overrun, but what sets this novel apart from other testimonios is that it is also written from the perspective of an elite. Yúdice says that testimonio emphasizes “popular, oral discourse...” (17) and typically speaks from a position of poverty and exploitation. *The Squatter and the Don* belongs within the tradition of writing against the conquerors, but excluding the Native Americans and mestizo population sets it apart from such novels as Yúdice and Kearney and Gugelberger discuss.

Even if the narrator is a third-person narrator he/she lets her opinions and feelings known, and as discussed in the previous chapter, there are certain instances where the narrator uses words such as “we” and “us”, to emphasize that he/she is in fact speaking on behalf of “the people”. In relation to this aspect Yúdice goes on to explain that “the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity” (17). The perspective brings us back to the narrator’s discussion of the Huntington letters, where he/she says: “The process began about that time and it has continued up to this day, this very moment in which I write this page. Mr. Huntington’s letters have taught us how San Diego was robbed, tricked, and cheated out of its inheritance. We will look at these letters further on” (172). We recognize that it is the narrator who is talking, because he/she says “I

write this page”, but there is also a sense of writing on behalf of a community because of the reference to an “us” being taught, in other words a communal lesson. Coral A. Walker writes that “[t]his form of literature works to denounce the repression during the regimes, and use a fictional narrative to captivate a greater audience...” (1). Thus, testimonio can function as an act of resistance, because it is a way of exposing actual problems and alternative versions of historical truths. This is also what *The Squatter and the Don* does, it exposes the truth about what the annexation of California caused.

My previous chapter discussed the importance of the narrator’s comments and also how he/she speaks directly to the reader. This supports the categorization of the novel as testimonio. The sentence: “We will look at these letters further on” (172), can be read as a trait of the genre, because as Eliana Rivero says, ““the act of speaking faithfully recorded on the tape, transcribed and then ‘written’ remains in the *testimonio* punctuated by a repeated series of interlocutive and conversational markers . . . which constantly put the reader on alert: ‘True? Are you following me? OK? So. . .’” (qtd. in Beverly 18). Despite *The Squatter and the Don* not being taped or transcribed, it is important that the narrator refers directly to and includes the reader in the novel. He/she does this by using the pronoun “we”, and also by indicating what is coming later on, which in turn serves as a way of making sure readers are kept on the “alert”.

The narrator in the testimonio must furthermore be convincing: “We are meant to experience both the speaker and the situations and events recounted as real. The ‘legal’ connotation implicit in its convention implies a pledge of honesty on the part of the narrator which the listener/reader is bound to respect” (Beverly 15). Readers have to be convinced of the authenticity of the text in order to create social reform. The authenticity of the text is related to notions of truthfulness and honesty, because authenticity is established if a reader believes that what he/she is presented with is the truth. Trust between the narrator and reader

is important in order for the text to achieve its goal—which echoes the alliance between reader and narrator that was discussed in the previous chapters. The whole novel however cannot be considered “authentic” because we know that for instance the characters and the romance are fictional.

One can wonder why the author would include a fictional romance plot in the novel if the goal of the text is to represent history as authentic, and, as Walker says “denounce the repression during the regimes...” (1). As we have seen, however, historical “truth” seems to be of greater importance than the romance plot, even if romance and fiction can be used to “captivate a greater audience” (Walker 1). Using fictional characters and simultaneously writing the history of the Californios makes the historic track more understandable and relatable to a bigger audience. A fictional novel based on actual history can be considered a more effective way of reaching an audience than a factual historical document, because it can create much more emotional involvement, which in turn may influence readers to reflect and even take action to right the wrongs. The romance plot, the courtship between Mercedes and Clarence, is then what drives the novel forward, and also what takes the reader through the novel.

The romantic and fictional aspects in *The Squatter and the Don* can be said to function as a sort of frame that holds in place and makes the painting, namely the historic track, more understandable to the reader. Writing a testimonio is a way of educating the reader on the history of California and the Californios, but the novel not only educates through the narrator’s comments or the historical documents that are presented. The reader is also “taught” through the characters’ dialogues. One example is in the chapter “The Don’s View of The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” where both George and the reader learn what the Treaty was and what it did to the Californios. The Don says: “The treaty said that our rights would be the same as those enjoyed by all other American citizens. But, you see, Congress takes very

good care not to enact retroactive laws for Americans..." (67). George is shocked at what the Don tells him, and responds "I never knew much about the treaty with Mexico, but I never imagined we had acted so badly" (67). Here, as discussed in my previous chapter, characters sort of stand in for the reader, and the Don simultaneously speaks to the reader and George.

*The Squatter and the Don* stages scenes where characters educate each other in order to mediate a certain kind of information to the reader. Don Mariano teaching Clarence about the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo serves as an example, where the Don says: "We were left to the tender mercies of Congress, and the American nation never gave us a thought after the treaty of peace with Mexico was signed" (177-178). Words such as "tender mercies" and "treaty of peace" are here used ironically because the Californios were not treated with tenderness, and the treaty did not result in peace. The Don is not aware of the irony that these words evoke, because he believed what the authorities told him. He believed in the American government, thinking that they would keep their promise in allowing the Californios to keep their rights as citizens; consequently, the text exposes him as innocent. Alluding to the Don's innocence may be a way in which the text tries to manipulate the reader, because this trait is supposed to evoke sympathy for the Californios. Thus, the text uses irony to evoke sympathy and also to emphasize the wrongdoings of Congress. This is analogous to Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's reflections as well, because he, too, saw the Californios as innocent. Padilla says that in hindsight, Vallejo "believed that Mexican Californians might have been better equipped to deal with the political and social ills they faced after 1848 had circulations of such books granted them deeper knowledge of the rights of free men in American society" (97). The books that Vallejo refers to are books which encouraged "'liberal ideas and any knowledge of the rights of free men'", but these books were kept from the public and were "forbidden to 'people of little intelligence,'" (Ibid qtd. in Padilla 97). Hence, if the Californios

had more knowledge of American society their situation would perhaps have been a bit different; what they did wrong was blindly trusting authorities. The use of the loaded words mentioned above, and the Don stating that “the American nation never gave us a thought” is also a way of trying to reach an American reader, playing on his/her conscience. When Clarence says: “I want you to talk to me frankly and give me your views. You have told me much that I had never heard before, and which I am glad to learn” (178), this illustrates his lack of knowledge on the subject, and plausibly also the readers’. In this way the narrator-witness informs the reader through the fictional characters’ dialog.

If the novel succeeds in convincing the reader of the severity of the situations described through historical facts and documents in the novel, and also in creating emotional involvement through the romance plot, it might be possible to “open the reader’s eyes” to the contemporary situation. The chapter “The Fashion of Justice in San Diego” starts with a reference to the “Goddess of Justice” telling us that her eyes are bandaged and therefore: “She is powerless to accomplish her mission upon earth whenever a Judge, through weakness or design, may choose to disregard her dictates” (331). The discussion of justice in San Diego introduces a scene where Peter Roper, who has a corrupt judge on his side, decides to steal the Mechlin house (after Mr. Mechlin shoots himself): “Peter Roper, knowing well with what impunity he could violate justice and decency, conceived the brilliant idea of taking the Mechlin house at Alamar, now that the family were sojourning in town” (331). To tell the story of how someone as evil as Peter Roper has managed to convince a judge to help him, is also a strategy the text uses in order to open readers’ eyes to the truth. In spite of Roper being a fictional character this scene shows us that we cannot know who is good or evil, and that we should not trust blindly only because someone has been given authority by the government. This is comparable to the conversation between Clarence and the Don about Congress and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, because this, too, speaks of the government as deceitful. The

judge in *The Squatter and the Don* allows Roper and his accomplices to keep the Mechlin farm (340).

A further essential element related to testimonios is that they are not only narratives of the past, but also narratives that want to infer “change in the social and political situation” (Walker 2). In order to cause change, a testimonio needs to be able to convince the reader of the authenticity of the text. *The Squatter and the Don*, as I have argued, does this, but it also tries to convince and even instruct the reader on what to do. Mr. Darrell’s often expressed fear of being laughed at serves as an example: “Of all the horrible tortures that the human mind is capable of conjuring up with which to torment itself, none was greater to William Darrell than the consciousness of being ridiculous—the conviction that people were laughing at him” (253). His fears keep him from asking for the Don’s forgiveness and doing right by him. If he had swallowed his pride and done it before it was too late (before the Don died), he would have spared himself a lot of grief. Mr. Darrell’s regrets are related to the reader, because the fear of being ridiculed may be the reader’s fear as well, and Mr. Darrell’s situation teaches us that we should swallow our pride and do what is right—if not, we might regret it. This is a way the text tries to make readers take action and to create social reform—if people do not focus so much on how they are perceived by others, but rather do what they know is right, then that will benefit everyone. Mr. Darrell is left with guilt when he sees what his actions have caused, and trying to make amends, he says to Clarence: “If I had not driven you away, you could have prevented their misfortunes. I was a monster. So now I beg and entreat, for my own sake, and as a slight reparation for my cruelty, that you be kind to that lady, as kind as you were her own child” (359). There is also a sense here of compensating, which pertains to the reader as well, because even if injustices have already come to pass we can still try to correct our wrongs.

### **Testimonio and Romance:**

I would like to return to the importance of the romance plot. The romance, as mentioned, proposes a solution to the problem—namely intermarriage, but in order to make intermarriage a desired solution for the reader we saw that the text needs to focus on whiteness. Since the novel wanted to reach an Anglo-American audience in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is important that the Californios be considered white. Thus, the novel needs a romance track in order to convince readers of the Californios' status as an elite. The text sets out to alter Californio stereotypes and set them apart from the mestizo and Indian population through the negotiation of whiteness and elite status. The Californios' negotiation of whiteness is related to “what Carey McWilliams wryly termed the ‘Spanish fantasy heritage’ of the Southwest” (Gutiérrez 33). The “Spanish fantasy heritage” is the “Californio, Tejano, and Nuevomexicano...” elite’s claim that they were of “pure Spanish decent...” (Gutiérrez 32-33). It is called a “fantasy heritage” because “historical evidence demonstrates that only a tiny fraction of the original Hispanic colonists of the Southwest could legitimately claim pure Spanish descent...” (Gutiérrez 33). The Californios in *The Squatter and the Don* present themselves as people of such descent, but when we know that most Californios were *not*, this questions the novel as a “true story”. Hence, the characters’ whiteness is perhaps not really true, but manipulated so as to make the Anglo reader identify and sympathize with the characters. If their whiteness is not true—that questions the novel as testimonio, although, as Yúdice says: “testimonial writing is first and foremost an act, a tactic by means of which people engage in the process of self-constitution and survival” (19). Consequently, not presenting the whole truth is a narrative strategy used by the text in order to negotiate whiteness, which in turn functions as a “process of self-constitution,” necessary in order for the elite to “survive”.

As I have stated previously, testimonio differs from traditional colonial writing because it is not written from the center, but rather from the margins. Don Mariano speaks on

behalf of the Californios, he says: “The trouble, the misfortune has been that the American people felt perfect indifference towards the conquered few” (177). The novel tries to educate its readers from the perspective of the “conquered few” hoping to turn the readers’ indifference around. The “conquered few” in *The Squatter and the Don* is an elite and one that the author and narrator try to make sure is perceived as superior to other groups. They do this by negotiating whiteness and trying to change Californio stereotypes, but through this process the text also creates and confirms already existing stereotypes, such as the “lazy” Indian and the “ignorant” servant class. One example is when Victoriano (one of Don Mariano’s sons) tells one of the Indians to take care of Clarence’s horses: “‘Yes, *patroncito*, I’ll do it right away,’ said the lazy Indian, who first had to stretch himself and yawn several times, then hunt up tobacco and cigarette paper, and smoke his cigarette” (278). If a reader is convinced of the authenticity and historical truth of the text, then he/she will most likely also be convinced of the Californios whiteness and elite status. The novel as testimonio with a “historical truth” further supports the whiteness and social status of the Californios in the text, and this is an important way of arguing against the historical romance genre’s conventions of a conquered backward people.

A testimonio can, as Beverly says, give “voice in literature to a previously ‘voiceless,’ anonymous, collective popular-democratic subject, the *pueblo* or ‘people,’” (19). In *The Squatter and the Don* it is the narrator who speaks on their behalf. There is one passage in the novel which illustrates the “voicelessness” of the Californios particularly well: “‘I fear that the conquered have always but a weak voice, which nobody hears,’ said Don Mariano. ‘We have had no one to speak for us’” (67). This is what the novels tries to change, it tries to give the conquered a voice. But by “conquered” the novel speaks only to the Californios, it is only their situation the novel tries to change—Native Americans and mestizos are excluded from the “conquered”. The novel as testimonio is consequently set apart from the more recent Latin

American tradition, because it only speaks on behalf of the elite. The novel completely ignores the mestizos and Native Americans' situation and what the annexation meant to them, and it excludes them from "the people" that it speaks for.

The negotiation of whiteness in the novel is a way of trying to establish or negotiate a space for the Californios in the American society. This is not related to their past but also to their future space. As I stated in the first chapter, already when reading the novel's subtitle: "*A novel descriptive of contemporary occurrences in California*", we learn that this is not a novel about the past but about contemporary California. That the novel is "forward looking" further supports the reading of the novel as a testimonio, because testimonio "does not write to the past; it is not concerned with 'tradition' per se, but with the future" (Gugelberger and Kearney 5)". The text may be set in the past, but intermarriage between Anglo and Californio as solution is a proposition for the *future*, and consequently also a way of negotiating space for the Californios.

Gabriel working as a hod carrier is an example of the Californios losing their position: "The fact that Gabriel was a *native Spaniard*, she saw plainly, militated against them. If he had been rich, his nationality could have been forgiven, but no one will willingly tolerate a *poor native Californian*" (351). These are Lizzie Mechlin's thoughts after Gabriel started working as a hod carrier in the city. She notices that her Anglo-American acquaintances do not want to have anything to do with them after Gabriel becomes poor. When he was rich they were welcomed with open arms, and his being a Californio didn't matter, but when he loses his money he is perceived as a Mexican. Even the use of the word "Californian", rather than "Californio" signals a decline in status. When discussing frontier romances, Crane says that "race is connected to power and power determines history just as it determines the outcome of the romances' battles" (51). Hence, if race "determines history", it is essential for the Californios to be considered white.

The future space that the novel negotiates is also related to national identity. As referred to in my first chapter, one of the characteristics of the historical romance genre is the focus on national identity. It is difficult to identify whose national identity is concentrated on in *The Squatter and the Don*—a Californio or an American. In some ways it might seem like the novel presents the Californios as wanting to avoid Americanization, because they are almost portrayed as superior to Anglo-Americans, and also because it is the American government and monopolists that the novel criticizes. The criticism of American legislators and legislation in the chapter “Out with the Invader” might lead us to believe that the narrator is trying to distance the Californios from Anglo-Americans. This is further underlined by the Don’s sense of loss of a bygone time, although it turns out that this is not the case. The Don says:

The majority of my best friends are Americans. Instead of hate, I feel great attraction toward the American people. Their sentiments, their ways of thinking suit me, with but a few exceptions. I am fond of the Americans. I know that, as a matter of fact, only the very mean and narrow-minded have harsh feelings against my race. The trouble, the misfortune has been that the American people felt perfect indifference towards the conquered few (177).

The characters do not hate the Americans or oppose being part of America; they like and even admire Americans. What they oppose is the way the country is governed. In the passage above we learn that the Don has nothing against most Americans and he even asserts that he has the same dispositions as many of them: “Their sentiments, their ways of thinking suit me” (177). The unions in marriage between Californios and Anglos such as that of Clarence and Mercedes and George and Elvira also support the desire for a new American national identity.

“The historical romance makes nations in making families...” John M. González says (153). It seems as if the Californios want to be part of an American national identity, but for this to happen the system has to change, not just to benefit the Californios, but to benefit everyone—they do not want to live in a society where everyone is corrupt: “If Congress acted right and did its duty as the mentor, guardian and trustee of the people, all would be well” (179). Use of words such as “guardian” and “trustee” is a way of illustrating the role Congress should have played, but did not. The novel points to how Congress failed and how it should act in the future: Congress should act on behalf of “the people”, and in this case “the people” includes both Americans and Californios, but not Native Americans and Mexicans.

The theme of national identity brings us back to the American literary tradition and Chase’s discussion of the contradictions and exploration that are recognized in the American literary tradition. He says that: “the American novel has usually seemed content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize, the remarkable and in some ways unexampled territories of life in the New World and to reflect its anomalies and dilemmas” (Chase 5). *The Squatter and the Don* does present life in the new world, specifically in California, and the “anomalies” and “dilemmas” that could be found there. On the one hand we cannot claim that this novel explores contradictions, because the narrator and the text are so embedded in trying to convince readers to take action that this controls every aspect of the text, leaving little room for exploration. On the other hand, if we read the text as a testimonio there is, as Beverly says, “deep and inescapable contradictions...” in the testimonio’s “narrator/compiler/reader relations...” (Beverly 21). This is complex because the narrator is a witness who narrates, but it is the author who functions as the “compiler” of information. To further complicate this, the novel is also a fictional novel that tries to convince its reader of its authenticity and historical truth.

I would like to return to Warford's argument that defining *The Squatter and the Don* as historical romance is a way of: "casting it as elegy of nostalgia rather than as social reform fiction" (Warford 6). Consequently, if the aim of the novel is to create social reform the novel conforms well within the genre of testimonio because when reading the novel as testimonio, it takes on agency in a different way than reading it as a historical romance, or even as a parody of one.

## Conclusion

Ruiz de Burton may have set out to write a historical romance novel, but we have to keep in mind that “in choosing a genre, an author adopts a partially alien vision and imposes on himself a difficult set of constraints” (Bakhtin qtd. in Børtnes 196). Even if she perhaps wanted to write a historical romance novel, her call for social reform overpowers the novel in such a way that she is not able to abide by all these “constraints”. In one of her letters to Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo she refers to *The Squatter and the Don* as her “poor little ugly child!” (Sánchez and Pita 12). Thus, even its author confirms that this it is not a perfect historical romance novel that conforms to all our expectations, but rather something that was conceived out of necessity—namely the social situation.

Peter Seitel says that genre functions “as an interpretive tool, that is, a set of concepts and methods that provides insight into the kinds of meaning articulated by a work and that accounts for the aesthetic experience it produces” (275). When reading *The Squatter and the Don* within different narrative genres it becomes clear that genre is in fact an “interpretive tool”—and that reading the novel through different genres provides different meanings. What we have seen from my previous chapters is that *The Squatter and the Don* can be termed both a historical romance and a testimonio, and that perhaps because of the importance of social reform it might serve better as a testimonio.

What complicates the identification of the novel as testimonio is, as mentioned in chapter 4, that this genre had not appeared at the time when the novel was written. However, Hayden White says that “in historical retrospect, we can easily see that a new genre may appear before a name for it is provided and that subgenres typically appear before they are united in a new protocol for combining specific forms with specific contents” (372). Thus,

even if the genre of testimonio had not been “invented” at the time of *The Squatter and the Don*’s publication in the form we know today, it can still function as such.

When considering the novel’s unease in relation to Bakhtin’s argument that genres are “form-shaping ideologies,” we are dealing with three such “ideologies”: The romance, the historical novel, and the testimonio. The romance’s objective is to reconcile opposites, but in *The Squatter and the Don* it is unsuccessful because of aspects such as parody, irony, and the dominating historical track. A characteristic of the historical novel is that it looks back towards a nostalgic past, and consequently it is more focused on the past than the future. The testimonio however concentrates on the future—trying to change the political and social situation. Consequently, reading *The Squatter and the Don* within all of these genres is valuable for what Seitel calls the “meaning articulated by a work”, because as we have seen, both the narrator and the last chapter “Out with the Invader” seem to be at home within the genre of testimonio. As Jostein Børntes says:

Genres are treasure-troves of potential meaning inherited from the past and by the artist’s creative activity brought over into the future to be liberated from the text by the creative understanding of new generations who will read the works from their point of view and in different contexts (Børntes 197).

The difficulty of placing this novel within a specific genre, and the project of trying to understand the complexities that the text presents pertain to notions of space. The Californios in the novel, as well as the ones actually living at the time of the novel’s publication, had not established or found their place in the American society, and perhaps neither had the novel. Perhaps it is this situation of not having established a space, or being settled, that the novel’s

generic unease reflects. Consequently, this aspect can be perceived as meaningful in itself, and that is what I have tried to explore in this thesis.

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