



DE-CONSTRUCTING THE IDENTITY OF THE OTHER VIA LEGAL AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS: *THE SQUATTER AND THE DON, THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JOAQUIN MURIETA AND AMERICAN INDIAN STORIES*

ÖTEKİNİN KİMLİĞİNİ HUKUK VE EĞİTİM SİSTEMLERİ ARACILIĞIYLA PARÇALAMAK: *THE SQUATTER AND THE DON, THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JOAQUIN MURIETA VE AMERICAN INDIAN STORIES*

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Abstract

This paper studies Mexican Americans and Native Americans, whose situation as the other was the result of their exposure to the colonial and racial laws of the 19th century United States. Although these two marginalized groups were the already resident people uprooted by the colonial power of the United States and their ties to the lands that once belonged to them were broken by laws of displacement and education, the American political system aimed more as it tried to break down the cultural identity of the mentioned groups. I look at three literary works to analyze how these systems are represented in literature of Mexican Americans and Native Americans as these works dwell on similar subjects that focus on law and education with an emphasis on Mexican American and Native American identities. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don*, John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* and Gertrude Bonnin's (*Zitkala-Ša*) *American Indian Stories* are analyzed to see the effect of legal and education systems on the identity construction of Mexican Americans and Native Americans in literature. Moreover, Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Indian Removal Act, and the education reform movement are at the core of this paper since the American legal procedure aimed to break down the other and serve the interests of the white population through these phenomena.

Öz

Bu makale, öteki olma durumları 19. yüzyıl Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin sömürgeci ve ırksal yasalarına maruz kalmalarından kaynaklanan Meksikalı Amerikalıları ve Yerli Amerikalıları incelemektedir. Ötekileştirilmiş bu iki grup Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin sömürgeci gücü tarafından yerlerinden edilen, halihazırda o bölgenin yerlisi insanlar olmasına ve bir zamanlar onlara ait topraklara olan bağları yer değiştirme ve eğitim yasaları ile koparılmasına rağmen Amerikan siyasi sistemi bahsi geçen grupların kültürel kimliğini de bozarak daha fazlasını yapmayı amaçlıyordu. Bu sistemlerin Meksikalı Amerikalıların ve Yerli Amerikalıların edebiyatlarında nasıl temsil edildiğini incelemek için Meksikalı Amerikalı ve Yerli Amerikalı kimliklerine vurgu yapan, hukuk ve eğitim odaklı benzer konular üzerinde duran üç esere bakılacaktır. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton'un *The Squatter and the Don* adlı kitabı, John Rollin Ridge'in yazdığı *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* ve Gertrude Bonnin'in (*Zitkala-Ša*) *American Indian Stories* adlı eseri hukuk ve eğitim sistemlerinin Meksikalı Amerikalılar ve Yerli Amerikalıların edebiyattaki kimlik oluşumuna olan etkisini görmek üzere incelenecektir. Ayrıca Amerikan yasal prosedürleri Meksika-Amerika Savaşı, Guadalupe Hidalgo Anlaşması, Kızılderili Nakil Yasası ve eğitim reformu gibi olgular aracılığıyla ötekiyi parçalamayı ve beyaz halkın çıkarlarına hizmet etmeyi amaçladığından, bahsedilen bu olgular bu makalenin merkezinde yer almaktadır.

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Immigration to US formed a constant tension between the native-born American and the immigrants. The nativists were anxious about the influence of newcomers on the white Protestant American culture, and this xenophobic fear resulted with the quotas on immigration. Nativists disregarded their immigrant origins and distanced themselves from newcomers as well as from Mexicans and Native Americans, who inhabited the American continent long before the Anglo-American nation claimed it. The imperial politics of US uprooted Mexicans and

Native Americans from their lands and forced them to become internal migrants. These uprooted people were further subjected to a legalized deconstruction as their land ownership, citizenship status, and cultures conflicted the interests of white Americans.

This paper looks at two groups of hyphenated Americans, whose situation as the other was the result of their exposure to the colonial and racial laws of the 19th century United States. Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Indian Removal Act, and the education reform movement targeting the Native American children shaped the fates of Mexican and Native Americans during the 19th century. The legal procedure aimed to break down the ‘marginal’ other and serve the interests of the white population. These two marginalized groups, Mexican Americans and Native Americans, were the already resident people uprooted by the colonial power of the United States. Their ties to the lands that once belonged to them were broken by laws, and yet the American political system wanted more as it tried to break down the cultural identity of the mentioned groups. I will look at three literary works to analyze how these systems are represented in literature of Mexican Americans and Native Americans. Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* published in 1885 starts the discussion on the new land acquisition of Americans as squatters, and this novel is followed by the analysis of *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* published in 1854 by John Rollin Ridge—also known by his Cherokee Indian name Yellow Bird. The last work that I will analyze belongs to Gertrude Bonnin, who in her 1921 non-fictional work published under her Dakota Sioux name Zitkala-Ša, narrates her story and reveals the impact of American education system on her Native American identity.

When the United States won the Mexican-American War in 1848, the two sides of the war signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. According to this peace treaty, US won the upper side of California, whereas Mexico got to keep the lower side. The treaty allowed citizenship to Mexican residents who preferred to stay on newly conquered American land. In their situation, immigration was between political spaces of old and new California, once a Mexican territory transformed into an American land. These politically uprooted people had the right to choose either Mexican or American citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo:

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. (Article VIII).

The treaty offered equal rights to Mexicans who preferred to stay on the American territory but after the discovery of gold in California and the subsequent Land Act of 1851, they were subjected to new laws and taxes that made it almost impossible to claim their property and sustain business. Shelley Streeby in her 2002 work *American Sensations*, looks into the rising tensions between American immigrants, Mexicans, and European and Asian immigrants as she analyzes American imperialism along with questions of race, class, labor, and literature of the period. She argues that the treaty marginalized the former Mexican citizens on legal, social, and economic terms even though it granted citizenship to them. The question of whiteness played a dubious role in their obtaining citizenship since Mexicans had a caste system based on pure European blood and light skin color even before they become involved in the American racial discourse. This existing racial understanding led the “*California, Tejano, and Nuevomexicano elite*,” who wanted to be categorized differently than the Mexican laborers, “*to persuade incoming American immigrants to recognize and acknowledge these status distinctions*” (Gutiérrez 32). In fact, their acceptance into the white society by California state constitution gave them the right to vote, made them eligible for citizenship and put them “*in a much better position than the Chinese, blacks, and Indians, who were absolutely excluded from citizenship on the basis of their race, as well as many other people of Mexican origin*” (Streeby 270). However, as Streeby also mentions, “*these legal provisions were unevenly enforced during the postwar period*” (268). The law that seemed to be in favor of the Mexican citizens who wished to become American citizens, were later revised to give a superiority to ‘real’ white Americans in economic interests and property rights. The representation of citizenship and property rights in legal terms, and the efforts to uncover the process of ethnic other’s institutionalization reiterate the importance attributed to a constructed American self. These themes complicate the questions of belonging to an immigrant/ethnic identity, becoming American, and participating to the racial discourse in Ruiz de Burton’s, Ridge’s and Zitkala-Ša’s texts.

A victim of the Mexican-American War, the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty and its subsequent laws was María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, who was born in a well-to-do Mexican family in California, Mexico. Ruiz de Burton married Henry S. Burton, the captain of the army that invaded La Paz. After the invasion she moved to Upper California and became an American citizen (Alemán 246). Her immigration, in this sense, was a product of the war that displaced her as an immigrant within the changing territories of Mexico and the United States. The newly created borderlands, the laws annexing the rights of Mexican American land owners, and the changing identity perceptions led Ruiz de Burton to publish her second novel *The Squatter and the Don* in 1885.

The Squatter and the Don tells the stories of two families, the Darrells, an American 'squatter' family, and the Alamars, the owners of the Alamar rancho. Ruiz de Burton unites the romance between the children of two families together with her social reformist ideas on the Land Act of 1851 and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Her American and Mexican characters from both families try to give meaning to their changing situations and to the labels they are defined with. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Darrell have a dispute with each other about their 'epithet' as the squatter. The word definition changes as well as how they view themselves in their conversation:

"That's exactly it. We aren't squatters. We are 'settlers.' We take up land that belongs to us, American citizens, by paying the government price for it."

"Whenever you take up government land, yes, you are 'settlers,' but not when you locate claims on land belonging to any one else. In that case, you must accept the epithet of 'Squatter.'" (Ruiz de Burton 7).

Mr. Darrell states that his acquisition of the Don's rancho is his given right under the law. According to his understanding, the land he will settle on is already his property as an American citizen. He mentions that he pays for it, making it more legal in the name of ownership. However, his wife disagrees with him, stating that if the land is already occupied, they will be squatters and not settlers. The settler has a mission that can be regarded as holy, setting foot on virgin lands that have not been occupied, bringing the pilgrim, the pioneer, the frontier ideas with him. The squatter, on the other hand, brings implications of plunder, which desecrates the 'good' intentions of American imperialism.

Don Mariano sees how the laws that were thought to protect the rights and property of the Mexican Americans fail. He believes that “*Congress hurried to pass laws to legalize their despoliation of the conquered Californians, forgetting the nation's pledge to protect us*” (Ruiz de Burton 138). In his view, the US defiles the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by passing new laws that annuls the former’s promise to render the Mexican Americans equal to American citizens. According to Don, these “*land-sharks, all possessing the privilege of voting*” are protected by the Congress since “*Congress takes very good care not to enact retroactive laws for Americans; laws to take away from American citizens the property which they hold now, already, with a recognized legal title*” (Ruiz de Burton 17). Don Mariano comments on the unjust attitude of the American legal system and in the process, he highlights the supposedly invisible effect of national origin and its reflection on how the government protects the interests of people who belong to the same racial status with policy makers.

Don Mariano loses his faith in the equal treatment of the Mexican Americans of California. He believes “*there are some enactments so obviously intended to favor one class of citizens against another class,*” to which they should “*submit*” (Ruiz de Burton 16). His land is invaded by squatters like Darrell who regard themselves “*justified, and authorized, to “take up lands*” (Ruiz de Burton 13). However, at the end of the novel Darrell realizes that he, together with the legislation, has caused Don’s death since “*[a] wrong legislation authorized us squatters sent us, to the land of these innocent, helpless people to rob them*” (Ruiz de Burton 341). By addressing the legislation as wrong and identifying himself as a squatter, Darrell acknowledges that he has been a part of the government-supported invasion of the Mexican American property.

This acceptance of the wrongdoings also acts as a method of reconciliation for the novel’s conclusion. As Mercedes, Don’s daughter, marries Clarence, Darrell’s son, the two families unite in a matrimonial alliance. Similar to the colonial narrative of the conquered woman and the white conqueror—as in the examples of Hernán Cortés and La Malinche, Pinkerton and Madame Butterfly, John Wolfe and Pocahontas, Henry Burton and Ruiz de Burton, and so on, the novel ends with a restrained promise of a future that can compromise the interests of two different people and two different nations.

Ruiz de Burton demonstrates the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as a defiled treaty that only serves the interests of the American citizens. She divides the line between 'real' Americans and former Mexican citizens by mentioning how the latter is kept outside the legal claims of property. At the hands of Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don* becomes a historical novel focusing on the land as stolen property and gives a sense of betrayal by the American government, which not only uprooted Mexican people but also subjugated them to second-class citizenship.

The same struggle is evident in John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854), in which Ridge gives an account of the fictional life narrative of the largely claimed California outlaw Murieta. Ridge, himself was half Cherokee half white, and the Indian Removal Act affected his family immensely. In his introduction to Ridge's novel, Joseph Henry Jackson mentions that Ridge's father and grandfather were murdered as a result of the conflicts between the members of the Cherokee Nation on the subject of migration under the Removal Act (xiii). Ridge's novel, however, does not focus on the removal of the Native American but of the Mexicans after the Mexican-American War. In this sense, questions of race, criminalization of the Mexican, nativist ideas in relation to whiteness, nation-building, and American imperialism are raised within Ridge's text. In *American Sensations* Streeby dedicates a chapter to Joaquin Murieta's depiction in the 19th century American popular culture, newspapers, corridos, and dime novels and she emphasizes "how in the lands newly acquired from Mexico, and elsewhere too, transformations in law, labor, and capitalism were inseparable from mid-nineteenth-century struggles over race and empire" (252). She explains how whiteness operated for the Mexicans as a privilege to obtain American citizenship, but states how this idea of white Mexicans started to fade as soon as they became associated with manual labor as "the attribution of whiteness to people of Mexican origin was connected to land ownership and class, increasing rates of landlessness and manual labor among Mexicans affected ideas about their racial status" (Streeby 252). The similarities between manual labor and slavery affected Mexicans just like it degraded the social status of the Irish immigrants. Landownership helped to upgrade the status of wealthy Mexicans throughout their process of Americanization, but as US imperialism annexed their land in subsequent Acts, the number of impoverished Mexicans grew up and this economic fall affected their status as white citizens.

This contradiction between the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and following Acts affected Mexican laborers as well who were already segregated from the wealthy Mexicans. The poor Mexican laborer was not only alienated from his land, but he was also subjected to the same treatment with immigrants from Europe and Asia. Ridge depicts their status as second-class citizens in the beginning of his text and says that after the War “*lawless and desperate*” Americans behaved in an undignified way (9). He adds that “[*a*] *feeling was prevalent among this class of contempt for any and all Mexicans, whom they looked upon as no better than conquered subjects of the United States, having no rights which could stand before a haughtier and superior race*” (Ridge 9). Ridge mentions how this language of American superiority shaped the racial conversation of the period as well as Murieta’s life, who “*contracted a hatred for the whole American race*” because of the inequalities within the society and his barbaric encounters with Americans (14).

Ridge’s book is a cultural production, which represents the racial discourse of the period. There are many references to physical characteristics of immigrant and American people throughout the text. The Chinese is one of the most hated immigrant groups in Ridge’s text, who are caricaturized in stereotypical images with “*a long tail, carrying a large bundle suspended at each end of a stick laid across his shoulders*” (63). Reis, one of Murieta’s men, targets especially the Chinese when he steals, and according to the narrator this “*was a politic stroke in Reis to kill Chinamen in preference to Americans, for no one cared for so alien a class and they were left to shift for themselves*” (Ridge 97). In this context, Ridge’s characters corroborate the racial discourse of the 19th century US as a result of their inclusion within the American racial habitus. He describes Murieta as “*a natural production of the social and moral condition of the country in which he lived,*” and emphasizes the importance of habitus upon the protagonist (Ridge 7). And within this habitus, Murieta’s character as a bandit is constructed after his encounters with a segregationist and superior American milieu following the Mexican-American War. Moreover, Ridge mentions in his book that Murieta’s character changes following the mob violence that he and his half-brother encounters. Murieta, bound to a tree and lashed, watches his half-brother as the mob hangs “*him without judge or jury*” (Ridge 12). Mob-violence is a recurrent theme in the story of Joaquin Murieta, and in transmitting the scenes where prejudiced crowd attacks or punishes the criminals, Ridge shows the reader how Mexicans are criminalized under the gaze of the white population and its laws.

Ridge even uses his main character to reflect on the criminalization of the Mexican as he uses Murieta disguised as one Samuel Harrington in court as he tries to save his friend Vulvia from being hung:

I am encamped within five miles of this place, and having heard from a citizen of your town this morning that a dark-skinned man, with gray eyes, was in custody on a charge of murder and that, although there was no positive proof against him, yet there was so strong a prejudice against Mexicans that there was great danger of his being hung by the infuriated populace, it just struck me that the prisoner might be one of my hired men, a Mexican, whom I sent into town last night, and who, much to my astonishment, did not return. (94).

This quotation highlights few points. First, Murieta passes as a gentleman from San José and in doing so he highlights the skin color of Vulvia, demonstrating his dark skin as an identifier of Vulvia's Mexican origins. Second, his depiction of the crime and the possible punishment of Vulvia points out the unjust treatment of the other in the court of justice. Murieta intends to show the judge that it is the prejudice against Mexicans that brought Vulvia before justice and not evidence. The American justice system is criticized for the injustice it prevails towards the Mexican, and Murieta also labels the involvement of the mob in the justice system as an initiating element of violence. The infuriated populace he speaks of is capable of hanging his friend without any evidence, a possible scenario which Murieta himself seems to excavate from the memory of the hanging of his half-brother by the mob. In the book, the narrator comments on the identity of Joaquin Murieta as a construction of the society since what Murieta experiences in the American society creates his identity and reinforces his character as a bandit. In this case, Ridge demonstrates to the reader that the legal deconstruction of the Mexican is not only under the authority of the justice system but also of the society in general since it becomes impossible to distinguish between mob and court as they both intend to punish the criminal. According to the narrator, Joaquin Murieta *"leaves behind him the important lesson that there is nothing so dangerous in its consequences as injustice to individuals—whether it arise from prejudice of color or from any other source; that a wrong done to one man is a wrong to society and to the world"* (Ridge 158). It is the American habitus that reinforces Murieta's identity as a bandit because of the injustices done to him as a result of his identity as a Mexican. Similar to Don Mariano in Ruiz de Burton's book, the Mexican other does not live

under equal conditions with the white American and is discriminated against before law.

Mexican Americans, however, were not the only group of immigrants whose identity as immigrants was constituted in accordance with their unjust legal treatment or their removal from their native land. Native Americans were subjected to this kind of uprooting due to the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This removal displaced the Native American and turned them into internal migrants within the national space. Replaced at reservations, Native Americans suffered under the legal hand of President Andrew Jackson and the late 19th century US education reforms. The education reform for Indian schools started in late 19th century, and according to Laura Wexler these reform movements aimed to obliterate the histories of black, Native American, and immigrant children. Wexler focuses on how the white middle class photographer women transformed the agonies of war into a peaceful environment through their lenses at the turn of the century in her book *Tender Violence*. Starting with the photographers of Native American girls in Indian boarding schools, she extends her argument to the autobiographical narrative of Zitkala-Ša, also known as Gertrude Bonnin, who was born in 1876 in South Dakota. Wexler argues how Zitkala-Ša's narrative placed her within the genre of sentimental writing with a nuance of her Native identity:

Although the moral structure and often the melancholy of Zitkala-Sa's stories merge with those of prototypical Victorian sentimental heroine, and many of the remembered incidents resonate with those of the blonde girls of popular fiction, their tendency is nevertheless iconoclastic ... the Native American heroine nearly loses her health and her spiritual footing by her determined and lonely adherence to the lessons of her books." (121).

Wexler states that when compared to the Victorian heroine of the sentimental novels, the Native American heroine suffers more physically and psychologically. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša's life narrative shows how her enthusiasm to go to the white man's world in the Eastern country ended with a broken self. Zitkala-Ša's story starts with the reminiscence of childhood memories and legends. Even in the first pages of her story, the reader learns that Zitkala-Ša's family has been removed from their land when her mother tells her "*the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away*" (Zitkala-Ša 9). However, the autobiographical text of Zitkala-Ša recreates incidents about her

white origins and omits her white identity from the text. The father image she creates in her text is *“buried in a hill nearer the rising sun”* (Zitkala-Ša 9) even though her white father Felker is unknown to her (Stone). In this context, she chooses to bury her white ancestry and highlights her Native American identity as a protest against the white man’s paternal authority over her body.

When US government decided to Americanize Native Americans through educational institutions, they imposed whiteness to Native American children to eliminate their culture. The process of Americanization through institutions was used both on immigrants and Native Americans. In this historical perspective, Americanization becomes *“a set of institutional devices and regimes that operated with an a priori notion of what and who an American was supposed to be, an essentialist idea of a presumed cultural nationality”* (Trachtenberg xxii). When the law fails to ban or construct the other as a desired citizen, the 19th century US government uses State institutions to mold the other into an American. Boarding schools for Native American children were branches of this Americanization system and they acted as agents of cultural eradication. This cultural eradication starts in Zitkala-Ša’s narrative when she mentions her desire to go with the missionaries *“who wore big hats and carried large hearts”* at the age of eight (Zitkala-Ša 45). Zitkala-Ša creates a textual representation of the tension between her already injured mother and her own eager personality to discover the land of the white man. However, equipped only with her mother tongue and her blanket she goes with the white men who *“came,” “saw,”* and *“conquered”* (Zitkala-Ša 48). The real conquest for her starts when she goes to the boarding school, where she hears that the school matrons will cut her hair regardless of its importance to her and other Indian children. She tries to escape, gets caught and is tied to a chair:

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now, I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.” (Zitkala-Ša 66).

When Zitkala-Ša decided to go with the missionary men in the first place, they had conquered her mentally. But when her hair gets cut, it is her body that is conquered, and her spirit that is tamed. The conquest leaves her body unimportant, takes away her authenticity, and transforms her into an Indian girl pretending to behave like a white girl. After her education, she demonstrates the tension created by the contrast between her mother's native way of living, and her own white American Christian upbringing in the boarding school. This tension was a result of the education reform as *"[r]eturning students, whatever their disposition toward their late experience, could not help but be affected by their sustained exposure to white ways of knowing and living during which time they inevitably acquired new attitudes, values, skills, prejudices, desires, and habits of behavior"* (Adams 336). The exposure to white American values at a young age destroys the acquired Native American values of boarding school residents and complicates the attitude of the student when she re-encounters with her culture of origin. In this context, Zitkala-Ša's education leaves her in a constant search for belonging. When she understands that she is no longer happy at her mother's home, she goes to the East to teach but feels the need *"to be nourished by [her] mother's love, instead of remaining among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice"* (Zitkala-Ša 92-93). This demonstrates to the reader that Zitkala-Ša's identity is torn between her Native origins and her American education, deconstructing her Native self to construct an American one. And yet, the gap between these identities is so big that there seems to be no reconciliation between these two identities as she further distances herself from the members of both groups.

Her mother, the source of Zitkala-Ša's Indianness, tries to show her the real intentions of the white man whose *"words are sweet, but ... deeds are bitter"* (Zitkala-Ša 47). When Zitkala-Ša's Eastern educated brother Dawée is taken from his position as a government clerk in their reservation only to be replaced by a white man, Zitkala-Ša's mother uses this opportunity to show her skeptical daughter the inequality they are facing: *"Dawée! Oh, has he not told you that the Great Father at Washington sent a white son to take your brother's pen from him? Since then Dawée has not been able to make use of the education the Eastern school has given him"* (Zitkala-Ša 111). In the eyes of Zitkala-Ša's mother, the white man deceives Indian children with a promise of a better future, but as long as the interests of a white man is concerned, the 'Great Father at Washington' will ignore the education he gave to his less lucky children.

Zitkala-Ša spends her school years enchanted with the white American culture she is exposed to. However, the aftermath of her education, the sense of foreignness from her own people, and the dual standards she experiences in the world disillusion her. She listens to her mother's stories of the "poverty-stricken settlers," "white beggars" who "rushed hither to make claims on those wild lands" (Zitkala-Ša 114). She understands that even poor, those white men have a better chance to progress in the US since they are entitled to the rights of real citizens, unlike the 'adopted' Indian children of America. Her disillusionment with the white way of living makes her question her education, which has "uprooted" her from her "mother, nature, and God" (Zitkala-Ša 120).

At the end of her narrative Zitkala-Ša comments on Indian boarding schools' mission to eliminate the Indian within the students of those schools: "In this fashion many have passed idly through the Indian schools during the last decade, afterward to boast of their charity to the North American Indian. But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization" (Zitkala-Ša 161). The cultural death of the Indian was in fact the desired outcome of the boarding schools. In the end, the Native American student is uprooted not only from her land but also from her culture. The imperial power of the US claims the land and the body of the conquered Indians, and as Richard Pratt aimed to do, it killed the Indian and saved the man through the education reform.

The imperial rule of the US in the mid-19th century and its concern for molding the ethnic and immigrant other into a uniform American identity form the foundation of Ruiz de Burton's, Ridge's and Zitkala-Ša's texts. This paper focused on the representation of American legal system on land-acquisition and criminalization of the other as well as the education system in the books mentioned above. These texts show how Mexicans and Native Americans were viewed as threats to white property and American identity. Ruiz de Burton and Ridge fictionalize the legal representation of the Mexican through his Americanization process after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, whereas Zitkala-Ša documents her own journey to disowning an institutionalized American identity. Although the first two are fiction and the last one is a non-fiction, these texts have one thing in common: the American self is not only constructed within the society but also within the governmental institutions as a result of its legal and education systems. This construction is also a deconstruction as the people subjected to these systems are forced to leave behind some or all aspects of their identity in favor of acquiring a

new one, which promises to bring a better future. However, the characters in these texts reach neither a reconciled identity nor the promised future and their representation in these books demonstrate how they are seen as the other from the beginning and are treated as such in the process, not leaving them the chance of equal representation in the institutional systems of America.

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