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Immigrant Labor in Contemporary Southern Literature, 1980-2010

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Abstract

This dissertation project emerges from an interest in immigrant labor, the globalization of southern literature, and the ways in which laboring bodies, specifically those of food processing workers, casino workers and motel workers, are represented in contemporary literary and cultural productions. Literary and cultural productions about immigrants and immigrant labor aim to problematize and challenge the dominant perception of immigration and narratives of immigration that continue to perpetuate ideas of exploitation and alterity. In doing so, these texts contribute to the reconstruction of the U.S. South as a global region and to the liberation of southern literature from traditional conceptual models that reinforce its insularity and exceptionality.

The introduction of this project argues for a different way of reading immigrant narratives that deconstruct binaries in the region in order to situate new immigrant narratives as contributing to the extension of the boundaries and borders of the southern literature. Here the movement of people across constructed national boundaries is no longer situated between spatially and temporally differentiated areas, but instead is seen as taking place within a global system. The contemporary cultural productions analyzed in the dissertation provide varying representations of immigrant labor and labor exploitation and include works of literature and a film.

The first chapter examines the ways in which the contemporary immigrant narrative is employed in the novel *Holy Radishes!* by Roberto G. Fernández in order to trace the perpetuation of labor exploitation through exiled female employees of a food processing plant in Florida. Chapter two provides an analysis of Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full* and focuses on the

novel's rendering of undocumented immigrant workers in food processing plants and its challenges to the ideological and social perceptions of immigrant labor. The third chapter focuses on representations of immigrant labor, which is performed in the public sphere of the casino industry in Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox*. The final chapter analyzes Mira Nair's film *Mississippi Masala* and concentrates on the labor of Indian motel workers addressing, as in the previous chapters, deep-rooted labor history and historical labor traumas in the region.

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Introduction

Immigration and Labor: Theories and Definitions

This project explores how immigrant labor and market economies have changed sociospatial reality and created hybrid ethnoscapes in southern literature. Undeniably, labor, immigration, and history are intricately bound in the American South, which, I argue, has been socially, economically, and culturally connected to globalization. The "plantation complex," to use Philip Curtain's phrase, matured and dispersed an international network of human relations, economic and political ties around the globe. In this respect and in a broader framework, scholars such as Martyn Bone, Suzanne Jones, Deborah Cohn, Sharon Monteith, and Jay Watson have begun tentatively situating the Deep South, most particularly the former "Black Belt," within the paradigms of the Global South, a configuration that suggests literal direction only insofar as it identifies areas subordinated to an internal or external Global North that withholds the economic and political means to achieve parity. It is arguable that low-wage labor and the free market economy, accompanied by the multicultural Global South, perpetuate the legacy of labor exploitation and assimilation. The emergence of literary texts about market economies, immigrant labor, industrial food processing and farming give new impetus to the development of global and multicultural approaches within southern studies. My purpose here is to draw attention to three works of contemporary fiction and one film about migration and to explore how new approaches continue to redefine globalism, multiculturalism, and labor economies in the South.

I situate this study by analyzing texts produced between 1980 and 2010 to explain the ways in which the changing demographic and cultural terrain of southern literature offer complex and globally connected stories that often expose the ongoing culture and blur the geographical borders

of literary studies. In this period the region became more globalized and received unprecedented numbers of immigrants, which greatly changed the demographic and cultural spaces in the U.S. South. Another important reason is that the rise of multiculturalism became "the most salient feature of American literature after 1980" (Bertens 231). As a corollary of this change, southern writers have created works that portray the experiences of immigrants: labor exploitation, diversity, and alterity. Southern literature in this period engages in portraying immigration as the result of political and economic turmoil and upheavals that caused immigrants to come to the U.S South and thus affected the labor, demographic, and cultural relations in the region. In explaining why people chose to immigrate to the U.S., many employ the rhetoric of the U.S. as the land of opportunity, and as a place where dreams can come true. This rhetoric, however, obscures the changes that have occurred under a new global regime of interconnected economic and political networks, which this projects aims to highlight.

Immigration and immigrant labor are some of the most controversial and popular discussion topics among mass media, politics and scholars today. These discussions are not region-specific; yet due to its historical background, geographical location, and reconstructing plantation as a living memory, the South has a prominent role in labor and immigration debates as one of the most prominent regions with deep-rooted global connections. While there are multiple positions on the immigration debate, scholars and writers focus on problematic ways that the immigrant narratives perpetuate historical nostalgia, labor exploitation, and alterity of immigrants. This dissertation thus explores the interacting forces of immigrants and immigrant labor, and the transformation of cultural and literary narratives as well as demographic landscapes and aims to

present the multicultural U.S. South in what John Lowe in *Bridging Southern Cultures* (2005) defines as a "coherent, all embracing view of the South, its people, and its cultures" (5).

The texts discussed in this dissertation problematize and challenge the idea of labor exploitation through historical contexts and tend to portray immigrants as cultural diversity and richness with liberal ideas of multiculturalism that acknowledge cultural differences and contribute to the cultural diversity of the region. I will use multiculturalism as a term closely related to hybridity, in the sense that it raises questions about cultural identity on a national level. I also discuss how the hybrid characters of the texts occupy temporal spaces in the southern locales while portraying that this temporality and hybridity is not confined to immigrants. Specifically, I will be employing Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" to portray the hybridity and temporality of some immigrant characters. Bhabha's theory is useful in analyzing the texts because

> [T]he theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national cultural, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (56)

Dislocation and hybridity give a sense of the uncanny in one's adopted country as the immigrant subjects experience the fear of losing their cultural identities due to the sense of cultural fragmentation and dislocation.

This blurring of the boundaries between the familiar and the strange is a theme that surfaces in all three novels–*Holy Radishes!, A Man in Full*, and *The Celestial Jukebox*–as the return of repressed feelings prod the various characters toward the recognition of their split subjectivities and, in certain cases, a renegotiation of these subjectivities which, in turn, enables other positions

to emerge. It is a process that Julia Kristeva describes as "unraveling transference" of "the major dynamics of otherness, of love/hatred for the other, of the foreign component of our psyche – that, on the basis of the other, I become reconciled with my own otherness-foreignness" (182). In this sense, the texts do not rely on racial theories or political theories that situate immigrants as too different from the dominant power and race in the region. Therefore, these narratives dismantle the binaries and mythology of homogenous white citizenry in the region, challenging the notion that situates immigration within the boundaries of labor and the nation.

By drawing on the intersections among globalization, multiculturalism, Marxist, and feminist approaches, this dissertation explores how labor exploitation and globalization alter immigration narratives and representation of immigrants in contemporary southern literature. Immigration and immigrant labor have captured the attention of various writers because they illuminate, as Edward Said stated, the defying spatial and temporal boundaries nature of American civilization at the end of the twentieth century. As Toni Morrison observes in *Playing in the Dark* (1992), American literature, "especially in the twentieth century, and notably in the last two decades has been shaped by its encounter with the immigrant" (92). While extending the borders of contemporary southern literature, the themes of immigration and immigrant labor permit a dynamic convergence–especially in the era following the Immigration Act of 1965–of multiple heritages in one society.

The social and political events that altered the paradigm of immigration, such as World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Cuban Revolution, led to the arrival of immigrants to the U.S. South. In this regard, many of the immigrants who arrived in region after the Immigration Act of 1965–in the postmodern period– came with a different purpose in mind. The immigrants who

arrived before the World War II pursued the "American Dream" since they believed that America is a new land, a "city on the hill," that promises richness and freedom to everyone who manages to reach the U.S. However, in the postmodern era this mythic perception has changed because there are many reasons why people immigrated to the U.S beyond economic ones. Most of the new immigrants considered America a sanctuary for freedom as opposed to earlier immigrants who sought economic prosperity and desired to achieve the American Dream. While not all contemporary immigrant stories so clearly illustrate the reasons for immigration, an important aspect of the modern narrative is the representation of the conditions under globalization that act as the impetus for emigration.

My interest in the contemporary immigration debate lies in analyzing and understanding the ways in which literary and cultural products address immigration and enlarge the geographical boundaries of southern studies including Global Souths in relation to the shared history. To portray the shift in immigration narratives, I read how Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox* reminds the readers of the traditional immigrant narrative, which reflects the notion of progressive narrative that acts as an ideological tool with the aim of achieving success: the American Dream. One of the most popular means of portraying immigrant workers is through the employment of the hegemonic immigrant story, an anachronistic narrative that continues to be perpetuated both in cultural productions and in the general debate about immigration. In addition, the traditional immigrant narrative describes the process of the "Americanization" of immigrants.

I utilize contemporary immigrant narrative strategies, Sasskia Sassen's theory of immigration and globalization, and multiculturalism theory to analyze the texts. In her work on immigration and globalization, Sassen stresses the importance of understanding immigration

beyond domestic policies and internal effects of the movements of diasporic peoples. Sassen argues that while conditions of poverty, unemployment, and overpopulation do play a role in migration, they alone do not promote the large-scale emigration we are currently seeing. For Sassen, it is important to understand the processes that transform the above conditions into a "migration inducing situation" (*The Mobility* 6). From Sassen's viewpoint, the texts discussed in this dissertation portray immigration beyond domestic policies.

To analyze the migration and globalization, new enclosures are used to describe how disadvantaged populations have been separated from various means of production, such as their land, and have been forced to migrate to bigger cities or immigrate to countries dependent on cheap labor like the U.S. Sassen describes this process in the following manner:

> The incorporation of most areas of the world into the capitalist system resulted in the disintegration or subordination of non-capitalist forms of subsistence […] Capitalism transforms land into a commodity. Because land was the basis for pre-capitalist modes of subsistence, its transformation into a commodity created a mass of landless peasants with little alternative to becoming part of the rural or urban labor reserve […] willing to be mobilized into the labor market. There was no longer a need for the direct, physical subjugation and mobilization of workers. The new social structure accomplished this by robbing them of their means of subsistence. (*The Mobility*, 33)

In contemporary narratives immigration is related to political events, which were stimulated by economic reasons, rather than an effort to achieve the American Dream. Immigrants enter the realm of contemporary southern literature as hybrid and liminal bodies who have travelled from both pre- and postmodern diasporas, from the Holocaust to the Cuban Revolution, from the Vietnam War to postcolonial places, and China to the Caribbean. These immigrants carried their memories, cultures, and languages with them and contributed to the formation of a globally induced multicultural South.

Violence and homogenization policies, border management, global capital, racism, the increasing mobility of people, forced migrations, economic crisis, poverty, the demobilization of left politics, and the state of wars have constituted some of the reasons offered in sociology, anthropology, and literature for the rise of multiculturalism. In this project, for multicultural theory, I use Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism* (1992) and Tariq Modood's *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (2013). As a significant component of multiculturalism, migration must be understood not as a mere response to the economic and social malaise but as a social movement. Due to these movements, marginal and peripheral ethnicities, and therefore cultures and identities, are in close contact and create a mosaic of diversity that can be explained through theories of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is closely associated with "identity politics," "the politics of difference," and "the politics of recognition," all of which share a commitment to revaluing disrespected identities and changing dominant patterns of representation and communication that marginalize certain groups (C. Taylor 25).

In his book Taylor discusses "the politics of recognition" and focuses on the importance of recognition. He states that it is a failure not to recognize that members of one or another minority or underprivileged group have a cultural identity with a distinctive set of traditions and practices and a distinctive intellectual and aesthetic history. Concepts of race, class, culture, gender, and ethnicity are driving themes of a multicultural approach. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. points out, "there is no denying that the multicultural initiatives arose, in part, because of the fragmentation of American society by ethnicity, class, and gender" (205). The texts analyzed in this project align with Taylor's multiculturalist approach and recognize immigrants as distinctive intellectuals and as a source of cultural richness.

The concepts of multicultural and multiculturalism have been used in various ways. One approach is to include the "perspectives of women, minorities, and non-Western cultures in recognition of the increasingly diverse character of life in modern Western societies" (*The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism* 196). The concept of equality is central to multiculturalism as well as to other conceptions of integration. For Modood, the key difference between individualist-integration and multiculturalism is that the concepts of group and of 'multi' are essential to the latter (3). To explain multiculturalism in a post immigration society, Modood asserts two processes that minorities are differentiated from the majority group. Modood explains the processes as, on the one hand, through the fact of negative 'difference': with alienness, inferiorisation, stigmatisation, stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, racism and so on. On the other hand, these processes evince themselves through the senses of identity that groups have of themselves. The two together are the key data for multiculturalism" (9). He further explains the relation between the two processes in the following manner:

> The differences at issue are those perceived both by outsiders or group members – from the outside in and from the inside out – to constitute not just some form of distinctness but a form of alienness or inferiority that diminishes or makes difficult equal membership in the wider society or polity. Multicultural accommodation of minorities, then, is different from individualist-integration because it explicitly recognizes the social reality of groups, not just of individuals and organizations. (9)

In this explanation Modood, similar to Taylor, focuses on the recognition of immigrants as distinct and significant segments of multicultural society. Multiculturalism, I argue, became a means of accommodation and acceptation of social, political, and cultural existence of marginal groups and non-white, mainly post-immigration minorities. This approach annuls the social exclusion, which is seen in the form of colonialism and racism, of black and white binaries. Globalization and

multiculturalism, on the other hand, provides opportunities for people to have "much more fluid and multiple identities" (Hall 252).

From this standpoint, I argue that southern literature fuses polyglot characters with multicultural and transnational identities. Contemporary literary texts are more involved the liberal theories of globalization and multiculturalism and depict diversity in southern spaces. In this vein, this dissertation analyzes contemporary southern writers who have engaged in immigration and immigrant labor through the lens of recognition politics as immigration to the South has deep rooted connections with global, diasporic, historical and postcolonial terrains. The texts and the stories in these texts reflect forced displacement, dislocation, and historical traumas from Cuba (*Holy Radishes!)* to Vietnam (in *A Man in Full*), to Africa (*The Celestial Jukebox*), and global connections with more than one terrain to Africa and India (*Mississippi Masala)*. The authors portray immigrants as people with confusion, loss of identity, isolation and oppression. In that sense, the texts revisit labor trauma of the past and connects this trauma to the present situation. I argue that these texts move beyond revisiting labor exploitation and southern labor history; they evolve a further stage that connects the U.S. South with Global South through shared histories.

The current immigrant narratives in this project place the motives behind the decision to immigrate on economic and political factors that exist within the present phase of late-capitalism. To explain this process, in my analysis of *The Celestial Jukebox* I utilize William Q. Boelhower's approach to dissect immigration narratives using immigration phases: expectation, contact, and separation. In this phase, the impetus for the exiled female workers in *Holy Radishes!*, illegal Vietnamese immigrants in *A Man in Full*, and the Indian Loha family in *Mississippi Masala* become a quest for survival rather than the pursuit of an ideological "city on the hill."

After the 1965 Immigration Act, immigrants reflect the transnational reformation of space. Therefore, contemporary writers depict the shifting national and global terrains of worldwide immigration. These immigrants are no longer people of color in peripheral regions of the South but they become a part of American experience. Contemporary literature illustrates the changing composition of immigration and therefore the changing composition of space in the region. This liminal space and position relegate immigrants to objects and deny any official status to them. In other words, this liminality causes a new set of challenges and perils and intensifies the alterity of the immigrants in the community. In *A Man in Full*, Tom Wolfe chooses to emphasize alterity and exploitation of undocumented immigrants, while other texts focus on the difficulties that the immigrants experience in the host country. In this sense, *Holy Radishes!, The Celestial Jukebox* and *Mississippi Masala* represent labor and positionality as a direct result of a worker's immigrant experience and condition. Contemporary southern writers persistently engage in immigration narratives to problematize the conflicts of an exploitative market economy and traditional national experience.

Labor History in the South

This section offers a brief labor history of the U.S. South and introduces some texts that analyzed labor in literature. There are references to the labor history and different types of labor in the texts I discuss in this project. Therefore, this historical and thematic survey forms a foundation for my project. The texts I analyze signal the need for critical analysis of immigrant labor in southern literature.

There is a nativist assertion that community, place, and religion are considered the characteristics of southern literature. The idea of the South, as George Tindall explains in

Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History (1989), belongs in large part to the order of social myth (2). The U.S. South has been, for a long time in its history, regarded as a backward rural space. In *The Advancing South*, James Maddox states that the South was a backward region and that its most important economic goal was to increase per capita productivity (qtd. in Foster 195). This measure is a function of the capital intensity of the industrial mix, the efficiency of employers, and the skill level and attitude of employees (Foster 195). One of the reasons for the region's backwardness is the history of the plantation system and its agricultural economy. While the North invested in industrialization and mechanization, the South invested in agriculture, the main source of which was based on the exploitation of human labor. Thus human labor became a powerful engine of economy and a significant productive force.

Throughout the history of the American South, labor and literature have become so intermingled that many scholars, historians, anthropologists, and economists have engaged in analyzing labor. The history of the labor market starts with the arrival of indentured workers. Large plantations that grew industrial cash products of the era such as cotton, rice and tobacco created need for labor, which led to the arrival of indentured servants. The indentured servants (and later slaves) became the backbone of the southern economy. Junius P. Rodriguez in *Slavery in the United States* (2007) explains the indentured servitude as a system which "clearly exploited laborers, but nonetheless thousands of impoverished English peasants […] accepted the offer and sold themselves into a period of limited servitude" (86). Toni Morrison's 2008 novel *A Mercy*, for example, addresses the issue of indentured workers in the pre-racial society in the South and signifies how economic concerns enabled exploitation of labor throughout the history. The landowners and colony leaders in the seventeenth century knew that labor was essential for

economic survival, so they created incentives–the headright system–for planters to import workers. For each laborer brought across the Atlantic, the master was rewarded with fifty acres of land as an incentive (Oakes 50). This system was used by wealthy aristocrats to increase their land holdings. The system seemed to benefit the servants as well. Each indentured servant would have their fare across the Atlantic paid in full by their master. Then the servant would be supplied room and board while working for the master. Upon completion of the contract, generally five years, the servant would receive "freedom dues," a pre-arranged termination bonus. However, only a small percentage of indentured workers completed the terms of their contracts. After 1676, planters began to prefer permanent African slaves to the headright system.

The headright system was followed by another exploitative system as the slave economy of the sugar plantations in the West Indies reached American shores in Carolina. The colonies needed labor and resorted to black labor because it was cheap. The new slaves displaced indentured workers. The notion that gentlemen were entitled to leisure nonetheless became wide-spread as a source of justification for the rise of planter aristocracy, many of whom believed themselves superior to mundane labor (Francisco 1). The plantation economy created clear class divisions in the region because most southerners did not have a chance to participate in this system in a lucrative way because they did not own land. The African slaves that were brought to the U.S. South had no choice to their destination or even to their destinies. They became the unwilling labor force of the system that exploited them not only physically as commodities but also emotionally. There are many slave narratives that portray the dehumanizing working conditions in plantations as they narrate their observations of field labor and firsthand experience of domestic labor exploitation, such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An*

American Slave (1845), Harriet Ann Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (*1861), and *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave. Related by Herself* (1831) as told by Mary Prince and written by Thomas Pringle, among many others.

Southern literature is continually reinvented at each new moment of conflict and questioning. The ongoing revival and shift in the scope and interest of southern literature opens new phases when confronted with crisis. One of these crisis moments depicts itself as the influence of existing cultures– black and white. Social and political phenomena such as the Civil War (1861-1865), segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) were significant moments of conflict and crisis in the South. After the Civil War (1861-65) and Emancipation (1863), most of the labor force that worked in the fields of the plantations moved upwards to the urban spaces of the North during the great migration. This marks the shift of the southern economy's transition from enforced servitude and slavery to convict lease labor, and ultimately contemporary market economy.

Following the Civil War and Emancipation, convict leasing was a legal system of penal labor practiced, which officially ended in 1928. As Douglas A. Blackmon explains, the convict lease system "was a form of bondage distinctly different from that of the antebellum South in that for most men, and the relatively few women drawn in, this slavery did not last a lifetime and did not automatically extend from one generation to the next" (4). He further comments that the system was "nonetheless slavery– a system in which armies of free men, guilty of no crimes and entitled by law to freedom, were compelled to labor without compensation, were repeatedly bought and sold, and were forced to do the bidding of white masters through the regular application of extraordinary physical coercion" (4). In his book *One Dies, get Another: Convict Leasing in the*

American South, 1866-1928 (1996), Matthew J. Mancini elaborate the systematic, political and state exploitation of inmates under the law of convict leasing. He states that the system was "a method of criminal punishment that reveals much about the economic and political condition of the society that spawned it, and, more important […] that nurtured and cultivated it once it had come into being" (2). Though the convict lease system disappeared other forms of convict labor continued (and still exist today) in various forms, including industrial prisons and the famous "chain gang."

The chain gang developed alongside the convict lease system as one of the two major forms of convict labor. In "Murder, 'Convict Flogging Affairs,' and *Debt Peonage: The Roaring Twenties in the American South*," Vivien M.L. Miller delineates how cotton field might effectively be understood as an extension of the region's penal institution. She explains, "Organized racial violence against African Americans and the perpetuation of debt peonage in Georgia and northern Florida provide a depressing picture of African American and poor white life and labor in the first third of the twentieth century, and of the extent of coercive labor practices" (77). Similarly, Walter Wilson in *Forced Labor in the United States* (1993) explains that "the chain gangs originated as a part of a massive road development project in the 1890s" (68). Georgia was the first state to use chain gangs to work male felony convicts outside of the prison walls. Chains were wrapped around the ankles of prisoners, shackling five together while they worked, ate, and slept. Following Georgia's example, the use of chain gangs spread rapidly throughout the region. We can see the reflection of this type of labor exploitation in *The Celestial Jukebox* when a nameless African American soldier tells the young African immigrant the labor history of cotton fields in Mississippi.

Another type of labor system associated with the South is the sharecropping system. Some of the ex-plantation owners and the southern gallantry lost their source of wealth and could not afford to pay for the workers to work in the fields since the economic migration from rural to urban, from fields to industrial sectors reflected worsening conditions in southern agriculture. Those who stayed in the region, black and white, possessed no means of production except their ability to work. These circumstances created a new type of labor, namely sharecroppers who worked on the fields of rich plantation owners as they did not have enough money to buy land. In the introduction to *Reading the South between the Wars, 1918-1939*, Richard Godden states that, from 1877 to 1941, "sharecroppers and tenants were a far more important labor force in the production of southern staples than were waged workers. In 1909, more than seventy percent of plantation land was operated by tenants and croppers" (ix-x). Similarly, in *Disturbing Calculations: The Economics of Identity in Postcolonial Southern Literature, 1912-2002* (2008), Melanie Benson Taylor argues that after Emancipation, rich plantation owners had no choice but to adapt to this new economy, and in doing so they found ways to make the new wage labor system profitable as it had been under slavery. Reconstruction and the decades leading into the twentieth century saw antebellum peonage reconfigured in a similar form, that of wage-labor- based sharecropping" (62). The movement of people, mostly black slave labor, from rural to southern cities or to the North created a huge demand for labor. Therefore, the demand for labor was partly satisfied by huge number of immigrants from different parts of the world.

Immigration and Labor in the South

Chinese and Latinos displaced the former slave labor in the fields and industry. The first census documentation of the Chinese in Mississippi was in 1870. Chinese workers were recruited

to the state by agricultural businessmen hoping to find replacement laborers for their fields after the Civil War (Jung 5). The first wave, known as the Pioneer Family, began arriving in 1840 in response to the need for cheap labor for the Gold Rush and to build the transcontinental railroads (G. Z. Liu). The Chinese grocery owner in *The Celestial Jukebox*, for example, is a descendent of the first wave Chinese immigrants and reminds the readers of this Chinese history of immigration and labor. The second wave, during 1920–1940, primarily consisted of small business families. The Immigration Act of 1924 allowed Chinese immigrants to work in the United States but without their wives and families. During 1943–1964, the third wave of Chinese immigrants, referred to as the "Reunited Family," arrived in the United States. The name refers to the reform in immigration policy that allowed Chinese wives to reunite with their husbands (Liu). The fourth wave, during 1965–1977, consisted of family workers and students. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 assigned a flat annual quota of 20,000 immigrant visas to the Chinese, which allowed Chinese families, many of whom were working class, to enter the United States (Liu).

The strong economic growth experienced in the South towards the end of the twentieth century was one of the major reasons for the influx of immigrants to the region. As capital fled to the region, new sources of labor from Mexico and Central America flooded the region, taking work in the region's low-wage poultry and fish-processing plants as well as the remaining farms and fields (Dubofsky 514). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, citizens of the southern United States awoke to the realization that their cities and counties no longer consisted of residents who could be divided along traditional racial or ethnic lines of black and white. Similarly, historian Raymond Mohl explains the arrival of Latino workers to the U.S. South as a result of globalization, which creates a multicultural U.S. South in terms of demography and culture. He points out that,

"globalization has brought a transnational, low-wage Hispanic labor force to the land of Dixie–a pattern of human migration that has produced substantial cultural and demographic change in a region where changes has always been slow and received with skepticism" (430).

Latino immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Cuba, comprised the highest percentage of immigration to the South. Migration from Cuba, for example, was due to the tumult of Fidel Castro's revolution; first elites and then professionals, middle class and finally working class families fled from the imposition of socialism in the 1960s and 1970s. As Ellen Wasem reports, according to U.S. Department of Homeland Security, almost five million immigrants came to the U.S. during the 1970s. Between 1962 and 1979, hundreds of thousands of Cubans entered the United States under the Attorney General's parole authority. In 1980, a mass migration of asylum seekers—known as the Mariel boatlift—brought approximately 125,000 Cubans (and 25,000 Haitians) to South Florida over a six-month period (Wasem 1). The number of immigrants arriving in the 1980s exceeded that of the 1970s, and both numbers were surpassed by arrivals in the 1990s (Massey 1). These immigrants were mainly from Latin America and Asia.

South Asian immigrants were another significant immigrant wave to arrive to the U.S. South as the result of the Vietnam War and American involvement in global economic and politic wars. The history of Vietnamese immigration to the United States is relatively recent. In this sense, A *Man in Full* in this dissertation focuses Vietnamese and East Asian emigrants and their working and living conditions in the region. On April 30, 1975, "the fall of Saigon" ended the Vietnam War and prompted the first of two waves of emigration from Vietnam to the United States. Vietnamese who had worked closely with Americans during the Vietnam War feared reprisals by the Communist party. Therefore, 125,000 Vietnamese citizens departed their native country during

the spring of 1975. They were airlifted or fled Vietnam on U.S. military cargo ships and transferred to the United States. In 1977, a second wave of Vietnamese refugees began fleeing Vietnam. This wave of emigration lasted until the mid-1980s. The second wave began as a result of the new Communist government's implementation of economic, political and agricultural policies based on Communist ideology. This group of refugees would come to be known as the "boat people." Most of the "boat people" fled to asylum camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, the Philippines or Hong Kong and awaited acceptance by foreign countries. To assist Vietnamese refugees, Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which reduced restrictions on entry to the United States (Povell).

While copious articles, essays, historical narratives, and socio-economic studies acknowledge labor's quintessential importance to the twentieth century, few of these speak to the ways in which immigrant labor entered into the southern novel and fewer yet choose thematic approaches to explain the labor in these texts. Several authors have delved into the problem of labor in American fiction. Walter B. Rideout in his book *The Radical Novel in the United States* (1956, reprinted in 1992) focuses on the radical novel and states that "a radical novel… is one which demonstrates, either explicitly or implicitly, that the author objects to the human suffering imposed by some socioeconomic system and advocates that the system be fundamentally changed" (12). Among over a hundred and sixty books published in the first half of the twentieth century, Rideout analyzes Sherwood Anderson's *Beyond Desire* as it portrays the impact of industrialization. The second section of the novel, "Mill Girls," reflects, according to Rideout, Anderson's sympathetic understanding of working class people.

Barbara Foley is another important figure in labor fiction. In her book *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletariat Fiction, 1929-1941* (1993), Foley gives a historical account of the reception of proletarian literature from the 1930s to the 1990s. She reviews major statements made by critics of the movement and describes the developments within the Soviet Union and their effects in the U.S. She explores the interaction of class, gender, and race within the proletariat movement. Foley explores the radical literature produced during the Great Depression by writers allied with the Communist Party of the United States. The book is composed of eleven chapters and divided into two parts. Part one focuses on political, historical, and aesthetic aspects of the proletarian novels of the 1930s, while in part two Foley discusses the politics of novelistic realism and sets forth a narratological framework for analyzing rhetorical strategies in politically didactic fiction. For that reason, Foley focuses on four major genres of proletarian fiction–fictional autobiography, the bildungsroman, the social novel, and the collective novel.

In addition to Rideout and Foley, Laura Hapke is one of the most distinguished scholars that contributed to the issue of workers and labor in American fiction. In her *Labor's Text: The Worker in American Fiction* (2001), Hapke impressively analyzes the history of the representation of workers in American fiction, beginning in the 1840s and continuing through the 1990s. She explores the changing and unchanging characteristics of imagined workers and worker fiction, from the antilaborite consciousness permeating pre-1930s novels to push toward the authenticity that Great Depression authors left as their legacy. Despite the large amount of literary texts, Hapke discusses only a number of well-known canonical works by Theodore Dreiser and John Steinbeck because most of the canonical works of the era ignored workers and their representation of a national cultural identity. Unlike Foley, Hapke does not delve into the proletariat novel in the

1930s. Instead she follows a new trajectory that deals with class, gender and ethnicity. In this regard, Hapke comes closer to a more inclusive observation in her 2001 work. However, although her work is an excellent contribution to the labor novel, there are not any close reading of texts and labor. *Labor's Text* is divided into three main sections: labor fiction from the 1840s through the Progressive Era, the 1920s and 1930s, and finally the period from World War II to the end of the twentieth century. With no effective sense of class identity through most of American history, workers have been far more susceptible to manipulation and exploitation by a capitalist system.

In his provocative and highly intellectual study of some of Faulkner's novels in *Fictions of Labor: William Faulkner and the South's Long Revolution (*1997), Richard Godden states that the South in the 1930s was undergoing a labor revolution, in which the old system of bondage was rapidly replaced with wage labor. This process provoked a deep anxiety in the psychology of the white hegemonic class, but being an unthinkable and unspeakable trauma, it was expressed only through some distorted or cryptic narrative. The "labor trauma" is a prohibited recognition of the inter-dependency between slaves and masters (Godden 1). In the institution of slavery, a master is an absolute labor lord who possesses everything slaves make. However, a master is actually dependent upon his slaves who are in fact entitled to his property. As Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman argue in *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (1974), "the plantation was categorically a business enterprise, organized and geared for revenue and participation in both local and national economies" (qtd. in M.B.Taylor 7). Within this context, the southern slaveholders had to repress the recognition deep under their consciousness and thus made it an unthinkable and unspeakable trauma.

The migrations altered the space and cultural dichotomy in the U.S. South and created the multicultural South with various ethnicities. In the introduction to *The American South in a Global World* (2005), James L. Peacock states that the South was not a homogenous place even in the 1930s. Peacock discusses that there was the Appalachian South and Hispanic Southwest (1). Peacock describes a global perspective that must also be grounded in the local in order for a region to achieve a transcendent identity that is free of the burdens of the past and aware of an interconnected future. Similar to Tindall, he emphasizes the richness of the region in terms of various cultures and ethnic groups. Peacock writes that "the colonial South had been called into existence by an early process of 'Globalization' that had created a worldwide demand for tropical products like tobacco and rice and pulled together a remarkable mixture of peoples from around the Atlantic basin" (1). Both Tindall and Peacock highlight the fact that globalization brought people from various nations and regions to the American South and created a society with numerous cultures and identities.

As a result of immigrations and globalization, the South became a multicultural space. Therefore, political and economic changes stimulated transformations in the daily life. New manufacturers and marketing companies changed the face of the region. The South, as recent scholarship has made perfectly clear, can no longer be torn away from its transnational roots and connections. The effects of multiculturalism and globalism on race, sex, gender, labor, assimilation and exploitation are inevitable in every walk of life. Thus, scholars such as Martyn Bone, Deborah Cohn, and Barbara Ladd have begun investigating distinctive cases of southern people and southern communities influenced by global change. They aim to display the patterns and dynamics that are the ramifications of the multicultural Global South.

Southern literature becomes a site in which cultural and racial conflicts are discussed. The South has never been monolithic. It was/is the Confederate South, Folklore South, Old South, New South, Fighting South, Queer South, Rapacious South, White Supremacy South, South of Civil Rights Movement, Multicultural South, and, last but not least, the Global South. Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn in their introduction to *Look Away: The U.S. South in the New World Studies* (2004) propose new directions in southern literary studies over the past decade, which has been envisioning the U.S. South not in relation to the North but in relationship to the other nations and regions which shared similar experiences, historically and economically namely Latin American and the Caribbean. The South is center and margin, hybrid and cohesive, and it is in constant flux. From this perspective, the region should be considered with, to use W.E.B. Du Bois's term, double consciousness. However, it is important to be cognizant of the multiplicity that shaped the region's original identity.

Ultimately labor is an important theme in multicultural southern literature and it remains relatively unrecognized. In this vein, this project emphasizes how contemporary representation on immigrants "can help us to think globally and comparatively about the region" (Jones 725). I contend that certain texts by writers from different ethnicities provide new immigrant paradigms that more closely engage with the conditions of immigration occurring in late-capitalism. In addition, I argue that these texts challenge more stereotypical representations of immigrant workers promoted by more popular cultural productions. By mapping out the ways in which each text situates the immigrant experience, I analyze how these texts interpret immigration, plantation nostalgia, and labor exploitation within the dichotomy of traditional and contemporary immigrant narratives. Thus, this project not only explores a topic about which little is written, but it also

provides the opportunity to read and survey a close reading of immigrant labor in contemporary southern literature connecting the American South to the Global South. I argue that these immigrant narratives discussed in this project provide us with a presentation of immigration as an ongoing process that no end or beginning. The narratives offer various positionalities based on the movements of individuals in liminal, hybrid and temporal spaces. The liminal and temporal position of immigrants enables the capitalist system to take advantage of them. In this vein, it is important to clarify the distinction between slavery and capitalism since I argue that labor exploitation in the texts I analyze portray the transformation of plantation logic into new forms. This transformation across disparate temporalities and spatialities display plantation's ability to survive through the adaptation of a socialist mode of production. This transformation, in other words, can be seen as a transformation from geographical organization of land, labor and production to modern day economic systems. I see this transformation as crucial as both slavery and modern capitalist investments represent forms of enslavement at differing levels.

Slavery and Capitalism

In this project, I argue that although slavery and capitalism are not equal systems, the logic of exploitation transcends and finds new forms to persist the entanglement between slavery and capitalism. The institution of slavery created a social and organizational structure that was geared to make more profit exploiting labor. Capitalism, on the other hand, is relatively a modern innovation dating no earlier than seventeenth century. However, as Franklin W. Knight puts forward, "although the connection between slavery and imperialistic capitalism may not have been either linear or direct, it is difficult to deny the catalytic function of the former for the latter" (62). Slavery with its mode of production, its structural organization, its manner in which wealth is

created through the production of commercial goods commenced the capitalist market revolution. Since its inception, the institution of slavery has been entangled with the idea of capitalism. Greg Grandin[1] explains the relationship between slavery and capitalism in the following manner:

> Enslaved people multiplied the fetish power of capital at least fivefold: they were labor, they were commodities, they were capital, collateral, and investment, they were consumers […] and, in some areas, they were money, the standard on which the value of other goods was determined. They were also items of conspicuous consumption. (Grandin)

Grandin's explanation displays the complexity of the relationship between slavery and capitalism. From this perspective, slavery had different connotations and meanings for people from different walks of life. For some it meant material wealth, while for some others it was an object of nostalgia. The texts analyzed in this dissertation depict the persistence of entanglement between slavery and capitalism. From this vintage point, I argue that slavery played significant role in "shaping not so much the social and financial dimensions of capitalism but its psychic and imaginative ones" (Grandin). Similarly, on the relationship between slavery and capitalism in *Between Slavery and Capitalism: The Legacy of Emancipation in the American South* (2014) Martin Ruef defines plantation as "a large agricultural unit […] that is oriented toward the production of a commodity crop, owner-operated […], and heavily reliant on hired or enslaved labor" (104-5). He further states that the plantation system "had emerged […] as the basic unit of capitalist agriculture" (105). Reuf explains the end of the system in the following manner:

> In the American South the plantation achieved its peak in 1860, when roughly one-third of all Southern cropland was concentrated in large agricultural estates. Nevertheless just one decade later, informed observers predicted that a time may come … when the cotton plant, instead of being grown in great continuous fields, a hundred or more acres together, will

[1] In his book *The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom, and Deception in the New World* (2014), Grandin provides a new transnational history of slavery in the Americas--and captures the clash of peoples, economies, and faiths that was the New World in the early 1800s.

> be cultivated as in a garden. By 1880, the plantation system had practically ceased to exist. […] on initial inspection, the disappearance of the plantation from in the Southern agriculture appears to have a straightforward explanation: namely, that it was a natural consequence of exogenous factors such as the U.S. Civil War and the emancipation of four million slaves. (105)

The emancipation of slaves and the disappearance of plantation agriculture did not bring an end to human and labor exploitation. Since the plantation economy was so firmly institutionalized in the American South, most planters sought to reestablish such a system to maintain their surplus and economic power, and this was achieved through institutional transformation. In other words, the southern economy "was transitioning between slavery and capitalism" (Ruef 3). The arduous historical relationship between slavery and capitalism is ambiguous. About the relationship between slavery and capitalism, Ruef argues that "whether one emphasizes the advanced capitalism of the antebellum South or the rejection of free labor in the postbellum era, the conclusion with respect to institutional continuity remains the same" (2). In this sense, the texts analyzed in this project show that there is a continuity of essentially capitalist character of American slavery and the market institutions that we recognize today. In other words, the texts depict how old materialistic desires and status distinctions have transformed, or in other words, are "mapped to new ones," to more capitalist and surplus driven society. This transformation is visible in most of the events that changed the face of the region.

From this perspective, the first chapter explores Latino immigration to the U.S. South and how surplus driven system exploit women's labor in the form of the interaction of class, gender, and race in the multicultural Global South in Roberto G. Fernández's *Holy Radishes!* (1995). Fernández portrays exile Xawan (Cuban) immigrant workers in the South, their place in the community, their connection to their past and cultural identity, and how they are abused in the

modern U.S. South. Though the Civil War, Reconstruction and Civil Rights Movements changed race problems and the exploitative aspect of slavery, the novel that this chapter focuses on emphasizes that the legacy of slavery continues to be produced in various forms. *Holy Radishes!* represents the continuation of the "exploitative logic of slavery" (M.B.Taylor 53). The text presents a way to get beyond ideas of essentialized national culture and singular cultural sensibility and thus offers a more sophisticated way of exploring the experience of globalization, immigrant spaces, labor economies, and multiculturalism in southern spaces. In *Holy Radishes!,* Fernández explores the Cuban-American experience in a nearly unintelligible supposed satire of immigration. The setting is Belle Glade in the Florida Everglades, where the former aristocrats of Xawa now live in exile and toil at the local radish-processing plant. In *Holy Radishes!* Fernández, through his portrayal of with the radish-packing house, offers a gendered perspective of exile and labor exploitation.

The second chapter focuses on undocumented and illegal workers in the South in Tom Wolfe's novel *A Man in Full* (1998). The book reveals the harsh realities of immigrant spaces, the labor market in the post southern metropolis in the American Global South. Conrad Hensley, the Californian laborer and former employee of Croker Global Warehouse, travels to Atlanta following the transportation network that assists the passage of often-illegal immigrants into the United States. In Atlanta he first travels to Chamblee where huge number of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong refugees comprise a multicultural immigrant space.

Chapter three shifts the discussion of contemporary immigrant labor to the traditional immigrant narrative form in order to discuss the differing immigration patterns in the South while paying special attention to African immigrant and casino business in Cynthia Shearer's *The*

Celestial Jukebox (2005). The text explores the multicultural South of the new century. It is set in the fictional Mississippi town of Madagascar, a town that reflects many of the changes that have come to the American South as a whole. The novel portrays an array of characters and backgrounds. Angus Chien, a Chinese immigrant who runs a small store near Madagascar; Boubacar, a young African Muslim who comes to Mississippi and learns to play the blues; a man who collects and repairs old jukeboxes; a gang, an eccentric lady who makes birdhouses from old books; Honduran farm workers, and an African American farmer, Aubrey, with a gambling problem, among other characters. In the text an old plantation is converted into a modern casino, which represents the exploitative system of capitalism as the perpetuation of slavery.

The last chapter analyzes Mira Nair's 1991 film *Mississippi Masala,* which portrays forms of labor and relations between African Americans and Asians (Indians) in the South. Gwendolyn Audrey Foster explains that there is a dialogic voice in the film that criticizes disunity between people of color, the dystopic realities of white oppression, and the perpetuation of economic exploitation of people of color (121). The film conflates diasporic-scapes, to use a phrase form Arjun Appadurai, of Africa and the South and centers on the relationship between Mina, a young Indian girl whose family, the Lohas, moves to Mississippi after being forced from Uganda during Idi Amin's 1972 expulsion of Asians, and Demetrius, an African American small business owner who counts several Indian motel proprietors as customers of his modest carpet cleaning business. The film explores life on the edges of society, and the struggles of Indian and African American laborers in Mississippi. Since the life of motel workers is a highway culture, they are not visible to the normal passerby. The ethnic groups are distinguished by environmental settings with rapidly changing group members. These groups display their unique patterns of behavior and culture

through these settings by the highways. Indian motel owners and workers populate most of the hotels in the region that are not chains. In *Mississippi Masala,* Nair presents a new description of labor through global lenses in a society informed by the global logic of domination and exploitation. In particular, Nair rewrites the labor story in aesthetical and romantic terms; however, as I argue, she cannot totally avoid colonial feminism, Marxism and criticism.

By examining the discursive appearance of immigrants precisely within the context of literary conventions, this dissertation responds to the perceived lack of creative and critical attention to immigrant labor in contemporary southern literature and argues that they are in fact essential to the southern writers' understanding of the region's global connections. Although few studies have focused on labor as mentioned earlier, there is of yet not many systematic critical analysis of the discursive construction of immigrant labor. Therefore, I have space to explore other roads that have been less traveled, placing a special emphasis on the interconnections among labor and class, gender, and ethnicity in southern literature. I am particularly interested in how literary texts by southerners and immigrant writers characterize those "others" and how, "through the discursive construction of the immigrants, these writers condense the contradictory political, cultural, and psychological effects of colonial conquest" (Trefzer 676)

While I have organized my chapters according to the different conditions I have identified in my argument, I do so for the sake of creating a sense of coherence. I do not mean to imply that the current conditions of immigration occur in a linear temporal fashion or to recreate Boelhower's linear schema of narration. I also am not arguing that the literature I analyze in this dissertation exists completely outside of dominant ideologies, but the texts do provide more complex representations of contemporary immigration and labor. Instead of claiming that the counter

narratives that I discuss are somehow more "authentic" or "real," I want to read these works as offering a different perspective or representation of what has become a popular literary convention. Instead, I hope that by reading literature through the lens of a new immigrant paradigm, I can contribute to a growing dialogue on what it means for individuals to live under the current global conditions of immigration and the role that contemporary fiction and cultural productions play in challenging or perpetuating anachronistic models of movement through national boundaries. In this dissertation, I hope to contribute to a much larger conversation about the globalization of southern studies in the construction of region and identity. In doing so, the projects contributes to the transformation of southern studies into a field that connects larger Souths, which reflect the multicultural, hybrid, and global side of the region. Thus, the project confronts the various ways in which the region is depicted as monolithic with black and white binaries.

Chapter 1

Immigrant Spaces, Labor Economies, and Cuban Immigrant Workers in *Holy Radishes!*

My overall project is interested in contemporary representations of immigrant labor in literary and cultural products in southern literature; therefore, this chapter analyzes Roberto G. Fernández's *Holy Radishes!* (1995), which depicts a complex representation of exile immigrant labor. Throughout the chapter, I read the exploitation of female labor and immigration through the lenses of feminism and capitalism. While feminist reading challenges and problematizes the oppression and the exploitation of women in domestic and economic spaces, it also prescribes strategies for emancipatory politics. Capitalist criticism, on the other hand, is utilized to analyze the text from the lens of the exploitative logic of late capitalism. In this vein, reading the text from the perspective of exiled female labor and immigration in the South will not only prioritize a gendered perspective, but also contribute to larger discussions which offer more sophisticated ways of exploring the experience of globalization, immigrant spaces and multiculturalism, which finally extends the epistemological and ontological borders of southern literature.

Roberto G. Fernández, an exiled Cuban-American novelist, short story writer, and essayist, emigrated from Cuba with his family during the first wave of immigrants in 1961. His writings cover a wide range of topics related to the immigration experience, from memories of Cuba left behind to cultural tensions and conflicts. He goes beyond displacement and nostalgia, the usual topics of earlier exile writing. After immigrating to the United States, he received a B.A. and a Ph.D. in linguistics. He began writing fiction while in graduate school, and later published innovative novels consisting of multiple texts–monologues, dialogues, and letters (Stavans 2215).

In his novels, Fernández portrays the perpetual state of identity and belonging crisis via, as Jorge Febles states "carnivalesque art of portraying grotesquely a community in […] state of crisis" (80).

Fernández's fiction includes two volumes of short stories and three novels. His first novel *La vida es un especial* (1982, *Life is on Special*) is a satire of materialism and commercialism of the Cuban community in Miami. His first novels, written in English–*Raining Backwards* (1988) and *Holy Radishes!* (1995)–are critical of the idealized past that many Cuban exiles hold of Cuba as well as many aspects of their present life as Cuban Americans in the United States. In *Raining Backwards,* Fernández portrays the cultural malaise and failures of the Cuban community in the United States; its members are isolated individuals who destroy others and themselves. *Holy Radishes!* has been read as a parody of Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and, more specifically, the Colombian's legendary village of Macondo, which becomes the idyllic Xawan village of Mondovi in Fernández's fiction (Williams 204)

Fernández, as an exiled writer, offers a "transnational, cosmopolitan, multilingual and hybrid map of the world that redraws boundaries by building bridges between Third and First Worlds" (Mardorossian 17). This hybrid map provides a crucial insight into the overlooked experiences of immigrants, specifically fictitious Xawan (Cuban) immigrants in *Holy Radishes!*, and enables the audience to explore the conditions of immigrant labor, race, and class relations in the South. Within this context, Fernández returns obsessively to the intonation of social trauma and material conditions of labor; at the same time, he addresses to the historical trauma of the region and connects immigrant labor and historical labor exploitation through his narrative techniques.

Through his narrative in *Holy Radishes!,* Fernández alters the phase of immigrant narratives and blurs the boundaries of many critical approaches to literary texts. *Holy Radishes*! moves beyond the traditional immigrant narratives and portrays the reason for immigration as a quest for survival rather than pursuing the "American Dream." By portraying educated immigrants, Fernández shifts immigrant narrative paradigms and problematizes the expectations of his audience. *Holy Radishes!* is about exiled Xawan families and female labor traumas in the host land because what the host country offers to those exiled immigrants exists much below their expectations. Carefully enfolding their stories into southern locales, Fernández succeeds in opening the local through dialogic encounters with the Global South via characters whose initial dislocation from traditional referents leads to a reconsideration of southern paradigms. In doing so, Fernández problematizes and complicates traditional immigrant narratives and constructs a binary between Old World and New World through the memories and acts of the female workers at a radish-packing house.

Liminality and Temporality

Holy Radishes! portrays the life of eccentric characters exiled by a communist takeover from their privileged existence in Xawa. These characters pursue their dreams of recreating their former lives in the remote community of Belle Grande in the Florida Everglades. While *Holy Radishes!* is a parable of the Cuban immigrant community, it is foremost the story of Nellie Pardo, a dreamer who longs for the idyllic place called Mondovi and her truffle-loving pet pig Rigoletto. In her liminal position, which is a "never ending movement, an oscillation across porous, evanescent boundaries in a multiple universe," Nellie forges an unlikely alliance to fulfill her dreams for a better world, reflecting a woman's capacity to endure, survive and conquer (Klapcsik

163). The exiled female workers in the packinghouse are the embodiment of their homeland as existing in differing spatial and temporal states. The personal experiences of the exiled characters and their perception of time differ from person to person. Through their temporal state, immigrant workers, especially Nellie, explore the relationship between past, present and future.

The narrator first describes Nellie's situation: "[t]hough the two years her family had spent in the bungalow seemed like twenty, Nellie could not bring herself to unpack their bags. Her daily routine of ironing and repacking helped to keep her faith from being snuffed out altogether. She hoped that this was not lasting, not permanent" (8). The phase of expectations are clear in the narrative as Nellie still hopes to go back to her country although two years passed since she arrived to the U.S. Accordingly, she keeps her luggage packed as if she is going to return to Xawa at any moment, which gives a temporality to her liminal situation. Her liminality and the temporal situation lead to a trauma which is articulated through the phrase of "snuff out." The word choice implies that there is an intentional aggressive action. Nellie stifles the flame in her heart in regard to her temporal state. She simultaneously lives inside and outside of her immediate situation. The existence of the flame in her heart would keep the dream to travel back to her country. With the help of this flame, she keeps her faith and belief on her country and her privileged status back in Xawa.

Fernández's depiction of the uncanny hybrid characters and the U.S. South as a hybrid space exemplifies what Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn elaborate in *Look Away* as "the potential for southern distinctiveness consists in what might be called the South's literally uncanny (unheimlich) hybridity" (9). They further state that "the U.S. South has appeared compellingly both familiar and exotic, both Self and Other" (9). The temporality of these characters shapes their

perceptions. Nellie, for example, always felt herself in a liminal and temporal space. The temporality she portrayed prevents her from entering the real world of the host country. Rather, she immerses herself in thoughts about her lost country. The temporality affects the perception of time and space, which differs from individual to individual and from event to event since people explore the interrelation of past, present and the future in their speech. The setting of Bell Grande in *Holy Radishes!,* which contributes to the syncretic hybridity, is set both in and out of the South, creating temporality in space and time. Thus, the temporal place as a setting becomes an example of "infused pluralism," to use James Peacock's term, which connects the South to the larger Global South (99).

The temporality, within which she believes that she is not here forever and will go back to her dream country, enables Nellie to survive the hardships and exploitations of dominant power; otherwise, it would be unbearable to live in this temporal and liminal state in which she is "otherized." For the liminal space, I use Cynthia Kadohata's metaphor of the "floating world." The "floating world" defines the permeable space that Nellie enters where cultures and nations meet. In this liminal or marginal space, Nellie senses that she is the "other" as she is neither "here" nor "there." The liminal space of exiled is both positive and negative. People in exile deny a sense of home and identity through disruption of identity, status, and property; the liminality of exile "not only causes paralysis and deterioration, but it also positions the exiles to play and reterritorialize themselves" (Naficy 85-86 qtd. in Foster 121). The reason why Nellie and others feel neither here or there is that they are exiled, which causes trauma in their liminal state. The traumatic experience is overwhelming for these elite class female workers. Their previous status makes the trauma of immigration and working in the radish-packing house more difficult to tolerate. According to the

Oxford English Dictionary, trauma is "a psychic injury, [especially] one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed; an internal injury" ("Trauma"). This type of emotional shock is explicitly portrayed through Nellie's obsessive engagement with history, wish to return to Xawa, and her long lost pet Rigoletto.

As Kali Tal explains "trauma is enacted in a liminal state, outside the bounds of 'normal' human experience" (17). The experience "outside the bounds of normal" accentuates the effect of the trauma, and dramatic tension becomes excruciating pain in her psyche for Nellie. What Nellie experienced back Xawa cannot be considered normal. In one example, her father, Don Andrés, is imprisoned after his house and wealth is confiscated by the revolutionaries. Nellie breast-feeds her father in prison to save his life, because he is not given any food by the revolutionaries as a punishment. Nellie remembers the case as a trauma:

> I guess I have to feed you….Please don't open your eyes…but I don't want to be your mom. I want you to promise me you won't consider me your mom, which means you would become Maria-Chiara's brother, and Nelson would become your father and Mam would become my daughter in law….I can't do it. I'm too ashamed to do it. (41)

The traumatic experience, along with losing all their wealth and friends, affects her life and psyche. For Nellie, the only recuperation from the traumas of the past seems to be to travel back to her country and face these realities. For that reason, Nellie constantly recalls the idyllic representation of Xawa before the revolution and wants to return to those days. The situation in Xawa is depicted as a violent space filled with death and corruption. However, her hope to go back to the edenic Xawa one day helps her to overcome the toil working conditions and abuses at the work place in addition to those of at home. The burden of trauma is ameliorated by keeping the ironed clothes in the bags which are placed under the bed for easy reach in case of an emergency to return to her

homeland. Her traumatized, psychologically injured consciousness speaks through the action of leaving her bags packed. In addition, Nellie, as the survivor of the violent revolution bears witness in social, cultural, political and historical contexts that remind her of the loss she experienced.

Female Labor and Double Exploitation

With all these contexts and experiences in her memory, Nellie arrives in a new space that will not heal her wounds; instead, it will add new ones. Arriving in Florida with her two children to reunite with her husband, Nellie becomes a participant in the "gender and labor division" characteristic of contemporary market capitalism (Barrett 152). In other words, Nellie becomes a component of what Michèle Barrett calls "horizontal division of labor," in which "women are generally employed in particular types of work which do not require complicated skills" (155). Employment in the radish packinghouse does not require any specific skills; rather, it requires workers without skills so that they can be employed any section of the conveyor belt. In addition to her unpaid domestic labor, Nellie becomes one of these unskilled workers and starts to work in the packinghouse along with several other Xawan exiled women. In this regard, in a capitalist society the demands of domestic labor and packinghouse duties define women as, what Charnie Guettel calls, "privately owned and doubly exploited" (57).

Holy Radishes! elaborately demonstrates the double exploitation and hardships that Nellie experienced in her temporal and liminal space. The book opens with the domestic space as Nellie performs domestic labor in her house. The text on the surface depicts her liminal space as transparent and obvious, yet it is covert and dubious. It is apparent that it is the first time she has performed this type of labor as there are various scars "which reminded her of the battles she had fought with the house," like iron-burnt flesh (10). She delicately irons and folds the clothes, which

remind her of her past in Xawa. Nellie's life and work experience, economic hardships, and the negligence of her husband are traumatic factors that hinder Nellie's disassociation with her past. Nellie's centrifugal attachment to her homeland is one of the causes of her sufferings and her liminal and temporal state. The garments she wore for special occasions back home epitomize her elite and wealthy past. Similarly, the elegance of the clothes delineates her sensibility and feminine vulnerability. In addition to her clothes, the economic and political structures of her life back in Xawa signify her elite status. For example, Nellie's father, Don Andres, had a lot of servants at home. Delfina, one of the servants, was like a "fairy godmother" to Nellie. Her background accounts for the reason why domestic labor intensifies the burden of exploitation for Nellie

Textual evidence accentuates the connection between the past and present, and reminds the readers that Nellie comes from an elite class. Since Nellie does not know how to cook, she uses a cookbook in addition to her husband's recipes. Her husband, Nelson, even reminds her not to forget to turn the burner on, which explains why she is not very willing to struggle with the "firing squad" (9). This explains why she has scars on her face; the work she needs to do at home becomes drudgery for her. There are ways in which Nellie is in a psychological skirmish with the domestic work. Not remembering to turn on the burner and perceiving the kitchen as a "firing squad" emphasize this struggle in addition to the perceptual traces of the scars and burns. While the scar literally disfigures her, the physical existence of the scars speaks for the invisible scars and wounds in her psyche. The text through Nellie's experience and portraying her as ill-suited for domestic chores complicates the assumptions that women are naturally better for housework and happy to do the chores at home. In addition, the text, via Nelson's help, prescribes a gender-free division of domestic labor.

While her labor at work provides extra income for her family, her domestic work arguably becomes more exploitative as there is no compensation for her responsibilities, which include childcare, cooking and doing chores as well as being an obedient wife to her husband. Ann Ferguson classifies this type of unpaid housework exploitation under the heading of "sex-class," which is also called as second-shift, in which women both work and are required to come home and do the domestic work. Ferguson further posits that "the concept of sex class is exactly analogous to the concept of a feminist epistemological standpoint: not a given identity or perspective, but one that is achievable under the right conditions" (45). Ferguson's argument supports the notion that women's activity has a "double aspect," what Nancy Hartsock explains as "contribution to subsistence, and […] to childbearing" (291). From this standpoint, arguably Nellie sells her power and produces both commodity and surplus value for the market economy working at the radish packinghouse, and produces use-value at home. It is one of the points that the Marxist concept of production would not be enough to liberate women in their participation in the labor force. The separation of home and work place responsibilities, when considering the family organization in Nellie's case, is the determinant of female oppression. Therefore, the text and immigrant labor should be considered from feminist perspective as well.

From a Marxian perspective, the space of labor in *Holy Radishes!* becomes a sphere for the exploitation of the worker under the capitalist and hegemonic system that takes advantage of the exile female workforce. There are ways in which the female immigrant workers are exploited in the work place due to being the "Other," and unskilled. This alterity is played out through gender

and race. Their exploitation at work place can be explained using the concept of Taylorization[2]. Taylorization is generally accepted as a management system "used for controlling manual workers" (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 78). The service orientation of the market economy has collaborated with a gender-based employment strategy to produce a greater demand for female workers in unskilled jobs. Therefore, the radish-packing house is the embodiment of this scientific management system that improves labor productivity and economic efficiency. In the conveyor belt system of the radish-packing house, the workers do the same repetitive job again and again, a job that requires no expertise. Thus, the system prevents upward mobility at the workplace and makes it easier to substitute or replace any worker who does not work effectively.

Doing a repetitive job which requires use of body–hands in this case–rather than mind is hard for the exiled Xawan workers as none of them had manual labor experience previously. Fernández delineates how hard it is for these women who were mostly well educated and had prestigious status back home to work in jobs that need manual labor and strength. When in exile, these women do not have the luxury of choosing a job. As a corollary, Fernández, with the radish-

[2] In his book *Business Consulting: What you Need to Know For IT Operations Management* Michael Johson explores Taylorism and states that "Scientific management's [application] was contingent on a high level of managerial control over employee work practices. Taylorism can be seen as the division of labor pushed to its logical extreme, with a consequent de-skilling of the worker and dehumanization of the workers and the workplace" (923). He writes, "Taylorism is often mentioned along with Fordism, because it was closely associated with mass production methods in factories, which was its earliest application. According to this system, unskilled labor is regarded as a great asset for the company, because running the line does not require expertise. The market wants unskilled and uneducated labor force so that they can take the utmost advantage of them. The assembly or line system in which workers do the same repetitive job, there is no need for a skilled worker. Thus, the system prevents anyone from being promoted to upper level duties. By doing so, it would enable the employers to substitute any workers when they take a day off due to sickness or injury in the work place. Put it another way, we can say that current global restructuring of capitalism enables employers to maximize profit by fragmenting production which allows exploitation of immigrant labor." (923)

packing house, portrays a gendered perspective of exile and how immigrant labor alters the labor space in the South. His characters, just like the South itself, have multiple temporalities; these temporalities create an uncanny hybridity, which blurs the boundaries of identity and cultural politics. In contrast to traditional immigrant narratives in which immigrants were depicted as uneducated and lower class people, *Holy Radishes!*, through the exiled female workers, challenges this perception and portrays the women as educated and upper class. In this sense, in *Holy Radishes!* Fernández engages in contemporary discussions of immigration and depicts immigration as a contributing factor to multicultural and more global U.S. South.

As a result of globalization, which has led to a rising trend of "multiculturalism" and "cultural hybridity," the postmodern South became a painful space with in-between identities. Nellie becomes an uncanny hybrid character between two spaces. On the one hand, she watches the American show "Donna Reed" and tries to imitate the family in the show; on the other hand, she does not unpack the bags with the hope of returning to Xawa. The language of the text depicts this uncanny hybridity as "fuzzy pictures" on TV and blurs Nellie's vision and perception of American family structure and culture which leaves her on the periphery of clearly constructed boundaries of the new culture due to a variety of reasons, including race, ethnicity, religion and gender. This peripheral situation intensifies her liminal and temporal state. The "downpour of tiny gray dots" intensifies the uncanny image of America that infiltrates her brain (9). Through the usage of diction and "uncanny hybridity," the text moves away from a representational perspective of hybridity to a disillusioned approach to hybridity as a form of negotiating subjectivity in temporal and liminal space.

In this vein, Nellie, along with other exiled female characters, does not converge two identities into a new transcendent one, as Homi Bhabha suggests; rather, her identity splits. While the text problematizes alterity as it comes from both exploitative and oppressive power of employer; it also offers alternative ways of healing for alterity. They are "the other" in the workplace and in the community, yet they become Xawan in their "enclosure." The Xawan women sometimes get together to play card games and talk about their memorable past back in Xawa. This gathering offers them a sanctuary to resist alterity and preserve their culture and identities in the temporal and liminal spaces they occupy.

The enclave also enables the women to maintain their solidarity and cultural values. Kenneth Wilson and Alejandro Portes explain that immigrants that are "spatially concentrated in a particular city or region [...] are less culturally assimilated than native ethnic minorities" (296). The immigrant laborers in *Holy Radishes!* delineate the existence of enclave, a dynamic and familiar cultural environment and support system. There are ten women working in the radish-packing house, most of whom are upper class women from Xawa. Dina, for example, "was a university professor of anatomy" back in her country (Fernández 99). Among the women in the packinghouse that had high-class status back in Xawa are Loly Espino, ex-wife of senator Zubizaretta; Victoria Rey, wife of the poet laureate Lisander Pons; Pituca Josende, wife of Chief Justice Josende; and Aida Lopez, the leading national contralto.

After possessing prestigious jobs and status back in Xawa, these women's current positions and the working conditions are physically and psychologically demanding. The circumstances turned them into commodities under the market economy. Kenneth Wilson and Alejandro Portes explain that there are two characteristics that international migration primarily deals with. The first

is that "immigrants are displacements of labor, that is, of individuals who migrate with the intention of selling their labor power in places of destination" (299). Although it is true that the flow of immigration from less developed to economically more developed areas occurs in order for immigrants to make money, in *Holy Radishes!* Fernández challenges the former viewpoint. For that reason, all his Xawan characters are elite class exiles rather than workers seeking to sell their labor. Nellie, Nelson and other Xawan characters in *Holy Radishes!* fled to the U.S. South and their abject journey constitutes a harbinger of what they will find in the States. They escaped from the political repression of the regime to the level of freedom and equal opportunities to pursue happiness, but they found themselves still bound by the shackles of an exploitative economy and social order in the South.

Labor and Late Logic of Capitalism

When people sell their labor power on the market, they become a commodity for the employer. From the vantage point of the employer, it is an important advantage although it modifies the structure of employer's oppression (Davis 159). This oppression finds its reflection in the *Holy Radishes!* in the form of overtime work. When there are a lot of radishes to be processed, the women go to work at night after they have finished their domestic work. During the night shift, the women work incessantly and complain that they do not have any breaks. Naomi's complaint, "[Jackson] ain't gon give us one 'til we finish dis load," mirrors the exploitative logic that regards the workers as commodities rather than beings (96). Through a Marxist lens, the capitalist commodity is different from the origin and class of the labor that produces it; in this sense, labor becomes "abstract labor power," and each worker of similar skills is equal to the next. It is the reason why the market economy prefers unskilled labor, as none of the workers have

advantages or superior skills over one another which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. For that reason, the workers in the radish-packing house "have to endure all sorts of rubbish" (93). According to Marx, "For capital, the worker does not constitute a condition of production, but only labor […] and what capital appropriates is not the laborer, but his labor and not directly, but by means of exchange" (Marx 99). The class and socio-historical background of the workers at the radish-packing house are not the primary concern of the employer; rather, the employer prioritizes the amount of exchange they would create as surplus. The workers become a factor of production because their services are purchased by employers so that they can produce goods for the customers.

The labor appropriation disproportionately dehumanizes the female workers in *Holy Radishes!* Although the radish-packing house provides jobs for women, they have to obey the orders of the employers to keep their jobs. The anxiety and fear of losing their jobs disempowers the women against sexual and verbal abuse from the foreman, Jack Jackson. Foreman Jackson symbolizes the oppressive power in the workplace that exploits and abuses the female body as a labor force. He is aware of the fact that the immigrant women have to tolerate his physical and verbal abuse, when he "gets real close to some of the women, rubbing his dark regions against the unsuspecting backs, pretending to be checking on their quality control" (Fernández 97). In addition to physical threats, Jackson implicitly threatens the women while he abuses them. He articulates that they "are lucky *to have a job*" (91, emphasis added). The women in the packing house do not want to complain about Foreman Jackson because they know that if they tell their families about his behaviors, their husbands would fight with him and as a corollary "that beast might fire" the women, which is not the situation they desire since they "needed money" (92).

The market economy creates dissatisfaction, which portrays itself either as exploiter or exploited and urges people to work more and create more so that they can consume more. As Melanie Benson Taylor explains the simple arithmetic of economic systems is "more work + more money = more happiness," which is the basic stimulant behind the capitalist-driven market economy (16). However, just like the horizon metaphor, there is no end to "more happiness." Once involved in this system, people cannot save themselves from becoming cogs in the consumer machine. The employers want to create surplus so that their wealth doubles. To do so, they try to get the utmost productivity of the workers with limited time and minimal wages. Furthermore, they create a fear of job loss; thus, they oppress workers at the workplace. As a result of this fear, though unintentionally, the workers become automated robots that act like they are programmed by desire and consumption. There is a struggle of life and survival in the immigrant labor space. However, the mentality of Jackson himself becomes a form of servitude that requires a disavowal of the recognition of the desires and fears of labor force. Doing so, the oppressors can maintain their surplus and profit.

The systematic repression of immigrant workers and workers in general is encoded in the capitalist system to obtain aforementioned surplus and profit. In that sense, *Holy Radishes!* delineates myriad forms of coercion that generally ensnare immigrant and female workers in the workplace. It is striking that Fernández chooses a black foreman, Jack Jackson, to problematize the enforced unnatural social divisions in the South that are cyclically recreated in America's industrial wastelands. The employers know that sustainability of capitalist enslavement depends on the exploitation of buried traumas of the immigrant workers. The involvement of the government in capitalist labor exploitation displays itself when Naomi, a Xawan woman who

works in the radish-packing house, hallucinates frantically that the approaching radishes are government forces coming to relocate them to Montana where they would work on ranches. She knows that "if someone in the family isn't working; the government comes and relocates the entire family to Montana," which exemplifies the "appropriation of labor" by means of exchange (93). As a result of this policy, the government threatens to send them to Montana as a punishment.

Foreman Jackson is well aware of the women's fear of losing their jobs and takes advantage of it. This fear forces the women to work in "crappy jobs" (88) like the radish-packing house without resisting the unfair treatment of the oppressive market capitalism and the foreman Jackson who acts like an overseer from a plantation. Jackson, as the representative of oppression, seeks absolute authority. He acknowledges that his position and the power that the position gives him depend on the labor of the women. This acknowledgement is the reminiscent of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. In *Phenomenology of Mind,* Hegel discusses "the forms of servitude" as "recognition" and "death" (173). Hegel explains that "self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (173). From this standpoint, Jackson "sublates the other independent being" (Hegel 176), the immigrant female work-force in the packinghouse, so that he can be certain of himself as true being. "The other" for Jackson is female workers, and the value of their output is their labor. Disempowering the female work force as well as preventing any upward mobility and liberation for these women reinforces Jackson's position, which enables the attainment of self-consciousness and oppressive power.

In his discussion of "use-value," Karl Marx clearly points that human labor is not valued in and of itself, but it becomes valued only in its congealed state, when it is embodied in the form of some object (Marx 76). This de-emphasis on the "homogenized labor" that produces

commodities speaks to the dis-empowerment of the worker in the movement toward more efficient forms and means of productions. Labor is one input in the production of commodities and all commodities have use-value and an exchange value (profit). The use value of workers lies in their capacity to work. For that reason, the workers at the radish-packing house have to perform at their full capacity to increase exchange value when the conveyor belt accelerates so fast to get the utmost benefit from the workers. The value of a worker's labor means less than the object's use-value, and the worker is actually separated from the works of his or her hands. This abstraction of labor relative to the use-value of capital speaks to the subordination of the worker to corporations that produce and consumers who possess effective demand.

The conveyor belt that Nellie and other women work is a symbol of the mechanization of human labor, which is also of "use-value." On the basis of Marx's description of the activity of commodity exchange in capitalism, the ways in which the dominant categories of thought simply express the mystery of the commodity form have been pointed out. These include a dependence on quantity, duality and opposition of nature to culture, a rigid separation of mind and body, intention and behavior (Hartsock 286). From this vantage point, in *Holy Radishes!* the conveyor belt and the working conditions in the radish-packing house separate not only mind from the body but also dismantle the coherent structure of the body by separating its parts. The band moves so quickly in order to maximize labor productivity by increasing labor volume in which workers are stripped of their humanity and turned into motionless machines to perform the work. The workers have to double their effort so that they can reach the speed of the conveyor belt. From this perspective, "the floating, bodiless hands" (Fernández 98) epitomize the mechanization of the human labor force, which shows how they lose their human side in the workplace and turn into

robots. The workers experience a pernicious deterritorialization of their bodies. The body is fragmented and has lost its unity. Fernández's diction, in this sense, exemplifies the incoherent and fragmented human body and psyche. The fast conveyor belt system disassociates the parts of the body as the hands of the workers "were caught in an allegro frenzy, moving like violins driven by a frantic conductor" (168). The description of the hands of the workers as a "frenzy" delineates the exploitation and abuse by the market system since the system is described as a "frantic" conductor who does not care about the workers' suffering, but only the outcome of the process. For the conductor, the outcome is the surplus that will satisfy both the consumers and the employer.

The frantic conductor and appropriation of human body reminds the audience of the "dehumanization," "alienation," and the "instrumentalization of human beings" discussed by Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse emphasizes that in the modern era the instrumentalization of things turns into a fetter of liberation and results in the instrumentalization of man (159). The workers at the conveyor belt who are turned into machines do not think, pace or control the motions of their bodies. They are extensions of machines; they are reduced to robots as "their hands moving like a side-ways millipede" (Fernández 91). The word "millipede" accentuates the alienated, incoherent, and fragmented body and emphasizes how human body is dismantled and turned into an impassive part of a machine. The legs of a millipede do not visibly extend from its body. Similar to the millipede, the hands of the workers are described in a state that seem like a different organ without any connection to the main body. In addition to this dismantling body and soul, the mechanization even mutes the voices of the workers to enforce the exploitative effect of the conveyor belt. The only sounds heard during these moments are the "twinkling sounds of Vicky's and Pituca's bracelets," which creates a mechanistic image of factory machines that absorb human sounds and

voices (92). The sound of bracelets is not a human sound; it reminds us that there are people present, but they are invisible. This invisibility creates an environment for Nellie and other exiled women to exist in the blurred and temporal space. The sound of the twinkling bracelets also emphasizes that workers act like machines as their hands move so fast. In other words, the sound suppresses all humanistic features in the work place. The workers and conveyor belt become parts of a unit that produces surplus.

In addition to the mechanization of workers that silences and makes them invisible in the conveyor belt system, the system exploits the women physically. The physical description of women's hands emphasizes this exploitation in the form of "worn and cracked hands, and swollen fingers" (92). With the rise of the modern capitalist industry, work is no longer differentiated into valued labors but unified into assembly line style work. This work is often tedious and repetitive, and the worker is never truly identified with it because she or he is only a cog in the machine that can be easily replaced. Indeed, workers who became injured or unable to work were quickly replaced. Thus, workers begin to see themselves as a faceless and identity-less resource that is employed in the work of the factory without any true recognition of their contribution. Since any person's self-identity and self-worth is related, the worker comes to feel a sense of alienation from themselves. *Holy Radishes!* depicts how the delicate hands of the once-elite class of Xawan immigrants are marred by cuts as they have to reach the speed of the conveyor belt. The conveyor belt, working at full capacity beyond human endurance, was "so fast that the drier didn't have a chance to evaporate the moisture" (92). For that reason, the workers feel that they are "going to faint" (92).

The traumatic memories of the past haunt the psyche of the immigrant workers in southern spaces. The psyche of the Xawan exile female workers in the radish-packing house is given through Naomi's near mental breakdown and hallucination. She takes the radishes as revolutionary soldiers back in Xawa who confiscated and looted the mansions and houses of the aristocrats as she cries out "they are coming to get [her], they want [her] pearls" (98). There are ways in which the workers are mechanized through their traumatic past, their oppressive and fearful present, and their anxieties of a foreign land as well as their fear of losing jobs. From this standpoint, *Holy Radishes!* reflects the anxieties of the twenty-first century immigrant community.

The swiftly moving conveyor belt enables the exploitative system to abuse every second of the workers' time effectively so that the system can produce much more work in a limited time. The repetitive movements of the women are machine-like and tense. The slightest distraction would disrupt the even process of production. "A cry of anguish" in these diabolical working conditions reminds the readers of the humanity of the workers by awakening them from "their zombie-like" state (98). In *Haiti, History and the Gods* (1995), Joan Dayan explains that "the zombie is the husk of human emptied of substance-nothing more than a thing-the human 'possessed' can satisfy needs and impulses" (72). One might argue that Fernández's use of psychological states could be interpreted as the result of the unsatisfied and voracious market economy, because the use of the phrase "zombie-like" excellently reflects the exploitative side of market capitalism in the work place and shows how workers are stripped of their humanity and how the market economy separates mind and body. The workers with lack of clear consciousness act like programmed "zombies," which becomes "the language of real life" (Fernández 98).

This language is communicated through unendurable working conditions and accentuates the impact of exploitation, when accompanied with the fast moving belt. The conditions that the immigrants are obliged to work are unendurable when accompanied by the fast moving belt. The workers are exposed to chemicals which are used to bleach and paint the radishes could cause inexorable diseases. The women workers in the radish-packing house are devoid of proper equipment while working at the conveyor belt, which causes them to suffer physically and psychologically. Their fingers are "swollen, numb, and peeling from the bleach and covered with tiny welts that had begun to bleed," because the gloves they needed for the work have not been provided yet (Fernández 271). Fernández influentially and powerfully illustrates the enduring intersection of labor, immigration, and food production in the South. Jackson's indifference to the depreciating working conditions accentuates the significance of recognition. Charles Taylor extends the notion of recognition and discusses that the demand for recognition, within the politics of 'multiculturalism,' is significant to minority groups as there is a "link between recognition and identity" of immigrant female workers in the radish-packing house (C. Taylor 25). Taylor asserts that "nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (25). Misrecognition can inflict inexorable wounds and hatred in the psyche of the workers. The oppressor does not recognize the worker as being and tries to get the utmost benefit in a certain time.

The oppression in the work place does not show itself only as sexual and verbal abuse but also in the form of the foreman's threatening physical power. Jackson shows the "threatening gesture of his fist" when women disobey him (Fernández 99). This is the embodiment of the politics of control, which is at the very heart of capitalism's history because capital attempts to

impose a despotic control over the workers. The female workers at the radish-packing house are under the surveillance of foreman Jackson as he watches them from his cubicle, which is reminiscent of Michael Foucault's "Panopticon." In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (1995), Foucault asserts that Jeremy Bentham's architectural design of the panopticon illustrates the power structure in a given society, in which every act of inmates can be observed from a central tower by a watchman without the prisoners being aware of whether they are being watched or not (228). The surveillance of foreman Jackson at the radish-packing house resembles the panopticon and serves "to induce" in the female workers "a state of consciousness" that sustains the dehumanizing effect of power on female labor (Foucault 200). Jackson ensures that the workers work effectively and turns them into automatized and dehumanized production power, which directly creates "a power of mind over mind," to appropriate Bentham's phrase (qtd. in Foucault 201).

The female workers of the packinghouse feel Jackson's gaze and, by extension, his intense destructive power over them even though Jackson does not watch them all the time. For that reason, they do not waste time talking to each other or reducing the speed of their work. Thus, the panopticon becomes a mechanism of oppression and functions to increase the productivity and efficiency of workers. As Foucault would say, there is no longer a continual watch of foreman Jackson at the packinghouse as a symbol of authority because the system has already been set in place; the illusion is there. In doing so, the panopticon, as a metaphor, is used to strengthen the exploitative power of the oppressor and enables the continuation of this power on workers.

Emancipatory Politics and Affiliation

The last section analyzes how Fernández delineates race and class relations in connection with immigration and labor. The traumatic history of the region and its race and class relations are portrayed through cane fields and the destructive effect of these fields on the space and people. Through this historical trauma, Fernández portrays how the exploitative logic of plantation economy is perpetuated in new forms. In this relation, Mrs. Olsen and her family represent white upper middle class family, while Nellie, as new target group, represents the oppressed. Fernández problematizes this relation and depicts how fragile the constructed race and class relations are by establishing an affiliation between these two women, which leads to the liberation of both. In *The Theory of Sexual Politics* (1969), Kate Millet argues that the oppression of women in patriarchal capitalist societies is not mediated by class differences between women. She posits that class differences between women are "transitory and illusory" and further maintains that economic dependency renders women's affiliations with class only as a "tangential, vicarious and temporary matter" (qtd. in MacKinnon 49).

The affiliation of friendship between Nellie and her American friend Mrs. Olsen can be analyzed from this perspective. Although Mrs. Olsen sometimes exploits and dehumanizes Nellie since she is an outsider and treats her as a second-class and illiterate person, there is a strong solidarity between these two women in the end, which ignores class and racial differences and negotiates the position of immigrant. I would argue that Mrs. Olsen in *Holy Radishes!,* in her relation with Nellie, embodies the notion of "dominant intellectual force" and becomes the decision maker who controls both Nellie's physical and mental production, positioning her as a disabled immigrant; to Mrs. Olsen, "she is deaf and dumb" (Fernández 53). In order to maintain her

dominant intellectual force over Nellie, Mrs. Olsen manipulates the social perception, which ensures that Mrs. Olsen has a social power over "dumb and deaf" Nellie. Mrs. Olsen's attitude replicates traditional immigrant narratives that portray immigrants as illiterate and anti-intellectual. For this reason, the job Mrs. Olsen finds appropriate for Nellie is the cleaning of the church, which stereotypes Nellie as an unskilled immigrant woman who is only capable of domestic jobs.

Through the affiliation of friendship between Nellie and Mrs. Olsen, Fernández delineates that race and class relations have redirected to new target groups: immigrants. The fact that Mrs. Olsen admits that she is "always ahead of [her] time" is a euphemism that insinuates her racial and social superiority (17). Being ahead of time implies possessing high intellectual capacity and interpolation. In their first meeting Mrs. Olsen ignores Nellie as an individual identity and does not even ask her name. Instead, Mrs. Olsen talks about herself and significant details of her life that would reiterate her status in the community. She mentions that they moved to the "white house, the one with the picket fence" on the corner (19). This reflects the dominant material relationship that Mrs. Olsen does not actually need a friend but somebody that would help her to achieve her goal and fulfill her dreams. Fernández problematizes the fact that the politics of race and ethnicity metamorphosed and still exist in both public and private spaces despite the fact that, for many immigrants, the South represents a site of acceptance, contestation, and ambiguity.

Mrs. Olsen does not hesitate to explain that her husband displays xenophobic behaviors. She depicts him in a state of mind that would hunt Nellie "down like a wild deer" if he sees her around his house (20). Thus, the text problematizes the perpetuation of haunting memory of the past and exploitative plantation logic. Contrary to southern cultural values of hospitality, the xenophobic attitudes that are ingrained in the mind of the South and continue to be displayed

towards immigrants in modern times is challenged. In this context, Mr. Olsen and his friends perpetuate the beliefs and codes of the K.K.K. They burn down the pawnshop that belongs to a Jewish immigrant; by wearing tribal costumes they give the impression that the shop was burnt by Native Americans. Their hatred towards the immigrants is the result of fear that immigrants would take jobs from white Americans; the members of the gang claim that "[immigrants] aren't only moving in, but they are taking jobs away from [them] folks" (255). Because of this fear of losing jobs and, consequently, control of the economic sphere, the gang feels they "ain't got no option but to get rid of [immigrants]" (255). They burn the shop to frighten the immigrants. The burning recalls traumatic racial histories in the South, and therefore problematizes the xenophobic attitudes. In this sense, Mr. Olsen's mentality does not differ from that of K.K.K. Thus, the text complicates the perpetuation of southern attitude towards the "other": immigrants, blacks, and Native Americans.

It is not only in the attitudes and behaviors of Mrs. Olsen that reflect the legacy of the Old South myth of plantation aristocracy. Using the suffix II added to the name–"Mr. James B. II" – signals aristocratic family ties (44). Adding "II" to their son's name and "III" to the fake child's name gives a sense of aristocratic descendent. For that reason, Mrs. Olsen does not want people to get the wrong impression about her when there is a lot of soot on her face and body as she is worried that people "might take her for colored and dump [her] in Brass Ankle" (44). The cane fields and the soot coming from the mill relates the immigrant phenomena to the history of labor exploitation and reminds the readers of the plantation economy. This analogy provides a critique of contemporary labor exploitation, where immigrants are substituted for slaves. Slaves worked under toiling conditions in the cane fields, which reminds the reader of hard work, exploitation

and dehumanization. Associating with the destructive nature of the cane fields and plantation economies, Fernández shows that the soot coming from the mill in Belle Glade perpetuates the destructiveness of cane fields, which are associated with contemporary corporations. Inorganic matter becomes a health-threatening agent that covers the city. There is a postmodern critique of modernity and industrialization as the soot destroys the environment.

This phenomenon is used as a symbol of an anti-capitalist revolt, which effectively expresses Marx's theory with regard to capitalism's appropriation of women and nature for exploitative purposes. Dirt becomes a signifier for Nellie, and therefore the Xawan immigrants' marginalized status in the South. The soot coming from the factory and physical proximity of Nellie's house to the cane fields covers Nellie's porch and environment with dirt. This symbolically reminds of the destructive effect of cane fields on slaves. The inability to control the physical surroundings hinders personal freedom and collective power. As Patricia Yaeger explains, "dirt comes to play in southern literature because of its metaphoric power in day-to-day life; it offers a category of alienation that has peculiar powers of abjection" (65). In *Holy Radishes!,* the soot, as a blackening agent, blurs the boundaries between races and problematizes the exploitative systems by covering nature and people. The soot that covered Mrs. Olsen represents how the plantation economy destroyed not only the blacks but also the whites. Therefore, the soot represents "the endless power of formlessness-the threat of feminine margins" (Yaeger 268). Human quantification and commodification is not restricted to former slaves but white women, elite men, Native Americans, and immigrants who have precise economic value in this system.

The friendship between Nellie and Mrs. Olsen leads to an entrepreneurship, which is the outcome of economic driven consumer motivation. Regarding the consumer motivation, Marx and

Engels in *The German Ideology* (1845-6) state that "the production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man [….] Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness" (qtd. in Eagleton 554). The idea of the exotic zoo in *Holy Radishes!* is the embodiment of "the production of ideas, concepts and consciousness" that is directly associated with desire and consumption. Globalization and transnational immigration generate structures of desire and consumption. Although the working conditions in the packinghouse are not satisfactory, the rumor that the packinghouse might close down causes anxiety. This rumor motivates Mrs. Olsen and Nellie to start a new job, opening an exotic zoo that will make them "rich, rich enough to buy fur coats, have air conditioners in every room" (Fernández 46).

The zoo they plan to open will have quasi-exotic animals from all over the world. They collect thrown away things from beauty parlors, beauty shops, slaughterhouses, and Red Hodel's Swellings from the Ocean. They find stray animals, which are in bad condition and glue seashells and glitter on those stray animals and open an exotic zoo. The otherness of these animals is emphasized with their pseudo names. Among the most popular cages visited during the opening was "Pygmy Three-Ear Short-Necked Llama from Cochabamba" (60). Fernández uses magical realism to blur the traditional realist distinction between fantasy and reality. The animals are actually from the area but Nellie and Mrs. James B. place different colorings and objects on the animals to make them look different and exotic. When it suddenly starts to rain, the paints and ornamental objects attached to the animals fall apart and the idea of the zoo fails. Mrs. Olsen and Nellie had to refund the money to the visitors. This failure illustrates the arbitrary nature of binary modes of thought, and suggests that the cultures and characters in the South form an uncanny

hybridity, creating a global U.S. South. Fernández's works of fiction are in many ways multicultural and he often writes in a post-national context. Trying to assimilate cultures and identities into new forms would not be much different from the exotic animals spoilt by the rain in the "Southern American Zoo." Fernández shows that dreams of their Xawan past, as well as their American Dream for the future, are nothing more than illusions for these Xawan exiles. Alternately, the exotic zoo complicates the "Otherness" of immigrants, implying that immigrants are not the "other" but one of us. If we try to assimilate or try to assign them new meanings and images, the images and meanings will not stick on them and will come apart. Through the exotic zoo, Fernández discusses the perception of the region and immigrants through exploitative encounters with the Global South via dislocation and exile. In doing so, Fernández encourages the readers to re-think the southern paradigms from global perspective assigning a shifting role to the South.

There are many ways in which the zoo becomes an allegoric and hybrid space. The first function is to satisfy the economic desires of the entrepreneurs. The residents of Belle Glade pay to see exotic animals, which is enough to satisfy Mrs. Olsen and Nellie's consumerist desires. Another is that Fernández uses grotesque zoological and botanical metaphors to show how members of the Xawan exile community and southerners reinvent themselves, or imagine that they have reinvented themselves, in their quests for earthly paradise in America. Mrs. Olsen and Nellie distort the natural forms of the animals, changing them into ugly strange creatures. Their passionate desire to become rich encourages them to take advantage of the poor animals. Their use of stray animals, most of which suffer from abnormal health conditions, serves to critique the greediness of hegemonic powers. In this sense, Mrs. Olsen and Nellie are not different from

foreman Jackson or the employer of the radish-packing house when hegemonic power forced the women to work under deteriorating conditions. Eagerness can strip people of the values that make them people.

These paradigms contribute to the solidarity between two women in the text. In other words, their solidarity is the result of a shared destiny of being oppressed and exploited at home and in the workplace. Nellie witnesses the alienating effects of segregation through the mistreatment of Xawan food processing workers but also discovers a sense of community beyond race-based affiliation. Nellie as an immigrant worker forges an alliance with her working class white friend Mrs. Olsen. The first time towards the end of the text Nellie and Mrs. Olsen walk side by side. The affiliation of sisterhood annihilates the formal distance between the two women when Mrs. Olsen asks Nellie not to call her Mrs. Olsen anymore and states that her name is "Wavene" (294), which is the first time readers learn Mrs. Olsen's first name. It is significant that the affiliation of friendship leads to this sincerity and revelation of the name.

The solidarity and pursuit of liberation in the end is a result of the shifting dynamics among the women toward class and race. Experiences and stages in their lives lead Nellie and Mrs. Olsen into a close friendship at the end of the book. In addition to exploited female work force in radish-packing house, *Holy Radishes!* offers other domains that embody solidarity among female characters from different races and classes in their quest for upward mobility and liberation. In this regard the affiliation of friendship between Nellie and Mrs. Olsen challenges hegemonic suppressive politics, xenophobic and traditional readings of female solidarity. Although Mrs. Olsen both explicitly and implicitly plays on racial and class differences in several scenes, she ends up being Nellie's best friend. The affiliation of friendship between these two women enable

them to severe the umbilical cord between hegemonic patriarchal society and them to travel to an unknown future. In their struggle with exploitative market capitalism and dominant patriarchal society, they decipher the power they have, and they define themselves in contradistinction to the values this community bears. In other words, these women liberate themselves as *woman* so that the "the man-woman union [won't] always be disfigured" (Davis 152). In their quest for liberation and full emancipation, Nellie and Mrs. Olsen reject and challenge labor and the production of use-value. In this affiliation, I argue that a subjugated woman was freed from the overt domination of hegemonic patriarchal and capitalist power by another woman. Nellie frees Mrs. Olsen from her dominant husband Mr. Olsen, while she frees herself from the alienation and otherization of the community as well as from the exploitation of the capitalist hegemonic power.

From the vantage point of these two women, breaking the yoke and control over their bodies and psyche enable them to obtain both freedom over their bodies and the liberty to dispose of their labor. By disposing their labor, they overturn the social forces that were nourished by the oppression of female labor power. In relation to this, Nellie and Mrs. Olsen's liberation becomes, as Marx puts it, "complete emancipation of all the human qualities and senses" (308). Nellie and Mrs. Olsen's liberation does not only unfetter the physical control over their bodies, but rather and more significantly, break the chains that fetter their spiritual freedom. Mrs. Olsen, for example, was not very dissatisfied and disgruntled about the exploitative power of the oppressors in the radish-packing plant. It would appear that, as a white woman, she had never felt alienated or "otherized." However, her liberation meant the emancipation of her senses, which she suppressed due to the physical and psychological tortures she was exposed to. Throughout the text Mrs. Olsen

implied and pretended that she comes from an elite family and has a happy marriage, yet as a housewife she was subjugated and exploitative control of her husband over her body.

As for Nellie, the liberation set her free of her fears and of the double exploitation. Although she frees Mrs. Olsen from her oppression, she could not travel alone and reach the harbor to aboard on the ship without the help of Mrs. Olsen. She achieves to free her spirit by flying out of the golden cage she has been placed since she arrived in the States. Her psyche could only be satisfied by flying to her Eden-like, fictitious country Mondovi. She resists and overturns the suppressive power that considers as use-value. In this sense, Nellie obtains her liberation freeing herself from all types of exploitative labor related classifications—worker, mother, and wife—and responsibilities. This liberation ends her temporal state and liminality and offers new opportunities to her. However, boarding a ship full of men whose language both of the women do not understand problematizes the borders of liberation for these two characters. Their final destination is not known, which implies borderless and hybrid cultures in hybrid spaces. In that sense, the end of the novel connects the local to the global as Nellie and Mrs. Olsen voyage in an open sea travelling to place that they do not know yet.

Chapter 2

Justification of Labor Exploitation, Changing Economies and Spaces in the South: Food Processing and Immigrant Labor in *A Man in Full*

In the previous chapter, I focused on the feminization of work power in the peripheral food packing plants. In this sense, *Holy Radishes!* depicts the history and story of Cuban exile workers and portrays the enclave that immigrant workers live in. In *Holy Radishes!*, Roberto Fernández engages in a critique of exile workers and their struggle in a foreign land. Similarly, this chapter considers how Tom Wolfe in *A Man in Full* (1998), engages in a social critique of labor exploitation and the global connection of labor. I argue that Wolfe uses critical notions of the shared history, surveillance and exploitation, and the undocumented status of immigrants to depict the conditions of Vietnamese immigrants (584). In this vein, *A Man in Full* illustrates how the U.S. South became a Global South through its historical and economic connections. In addition, Wolfe's text delineates how food processing plants and immigrant labor employed in these plants change urban spaces and economic paradigms. Wolfe's depiction of the new immigrant paradigm pays close attention to the undocumented worker's constant state of unofficial living in the South. In connection with this, Wolfe problematizes the working conditions of the immigrants through food processing plants; therefore, he aims to create awareness that would change perceptions and perpetuations of the economic exploitation of labor. In doing so, Wolfe enters into a dialogic relationship with his audience over the impact of the exploitative logic of capitalism on immigration and immigrant labor.

Before engaging in a close analysis of immigrant as other in *A Man in Full*, I first remind the readers Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) to portray how deeply rooted the theme of

"immigrant labor exploitation" in American literature is. There are ways in which using *The Jungle* as a departure point contributes to the development of my argument. First, it shows whether working conditions and the perception of immigrants have changed or not. Then, it contributes to display how the flow of immigration has changed from the North to the South. In this sense, it is significant that Sinclair aims to raise social awareness on the conditions and alterity of the immigrants a century ago; Wolfe takes the same critical point and criticizes the working conditions and the perceptions of immigrants. Since the publication of *The Jungle* at the beginning of the twentieth century, much attention has been given to the meat-poultry processing plants in America. Sinclair portrays the squalid conditions in which immigrants live and work in Chicago's meat packinghouses at the beginning of the twentieth century. Leslie A. Levin argues that Sinclair "wrote [*The Jungle*] to awaken the nation to the exploitation of immigrant workers in Chicago's Packing town and to advocate the workers' conversion to Socialism" (1). Sinclair gives this message through the Lithuanian immigrant protagonist Jurgis Rudkus, when Jurgis comes across a rally organized by socialists. He listens to their ideology and decides to embrace socialist party ideals as a remedy for the problems of the working class people.

Within this context, *A Man in Full*, via a white American character, depicts the woeful and hopeless conditions under which immigrants worked and problematizes the fact that although these workplaces offer these immigrants so-called the "American Dream," creating opportunities of jobs for unskilled workers, corporate capitalist motives exploit the immigrants who were riveted by their own destiny turning them into cogs in the great food processing machine. In this sense, I argue Wolfe reiterates Sinclair's argument and challenges labor exploitation in a new setting: southern poultry processing plants.

A Man in Full portrays that the conditions of the immigrant workers in food processing plants have not changed since Sinclair's time. The exploitative logic of labor and precisely immigrant labor in food processing plants attracted the attention of scholars from various fields. For example, anthropologist Donald D. Stull et al. in their book *Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry in North America* (2013) argue that poultry processing plants are "a powerful indictment of evils of capitalism, industrialization, corporate greed, and exploitation of working men and women" (91). Stull and Broadway further state that "meat and poultry processing in the twenty-first century is regrettably reminiscent of what Sinclair described early in the twentieth century" (91).

The Jungle, according to Steve Bjerklie, "caused Congress to establish…. a comprehensive regulatory program for the industry" (85). Much of the urban immigrant population in *The Jungle*, particularly in the Chicago stockyards, is composed of Irish, German, and Slavic immigrants seeking a better life (Levin 1). However, in the aftermath of the World War II, there has been profound change in the scope and character of immigration to the United States. Contrary to the former immigrant demographics which were overwhelmingly European, these newcomers are mostly from either Asia or Latin America. The legacy of colonialism, military conquest, and political/economic problems are among the reasons of this alteration. Wolfe skillfully intertwines military involvement and political/economic derives behind America's involvement in the Vietnam War and the arrival of Vietnamese and other East Asian refugees to America. As Ruben G. Rumbaut points out, "the most recently arrived Asian groups were Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese, admitted as a political refugees–a dialectical legacy of the U.S. role in the Indochina War" (27). It is clear that ethnicity of the immigrants differs greatly between Sinclair's and Wolfe's

time due to political and economic reasons, yet the market economy and the exploitative aspect of the economy arguably remains unchanged.

In the way that *The Jungle* pulled its audiences' gaze toward food processing and conditions of immigrant labor in Chicago, *A Man in Full* directs a lot of attention to its setting, Atlanta, and the poultry industry in the South. Atlanta, as Martyn Bone explains, represents capitalist land speculation and real-estate development through the actions and perspective of the novel's protagonist, Charlie Croker. Some critics, such as Bone, have read *A Man in Full* in light of myriad issues–growing estate capitalism, urbanization, masculinity, and race relations–however, there is no work that has considered how *A Man in Full* might speak to the contemporary question of immigrant labor and the changing economic and social structure of the South. In that sense this chapter closes that gap in the field and focuses on how literature reflects the problem of undocumented workers in the U.S. South. *A Man in Full* shows that today the meatpacking workforce once again consists largely of vulnerable new immigrants, arriving from Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

After this introductory revisiting of the issue of immigrant labor in the beginning of the twentieth century, in the following section of this chapter I aim to analyze how Wolfe reacts to these changes and attempt to show how Wolfe connects larger historical labor issues with contemporary stories through Vietnamese immigrants and his white American middle-class character, Conrad Hensley. It is apparent that *A Man in Full* focuses on East Asian immigrations and highlights the complex relationships between global labor flows, urban development, and changing economies in the South, and underscores how these factors work together to alter demographics as well as spatial segregation. In doing so, the text reveals that the demographics of

immigrants dramatically changed after the Immigration Act of 1965. There are ways in which Wolfe shows the shifting dynamics and paradigms in America since Sinclair's provocative work. The flow of immigrants changed from North to the South towards the end of the twentieth century. Thus, Wolfe draws attention to the despicable working conditions of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian immigrants in a poultry-processing factory in Atlanta.

In his professional life Wolfe is interested in the problems of immigrants and has observed their condition closely. For Wolfe, immigrants are the changing face of American society. Wolfe's educational and professional background as a journalist enables him to observe social alterations and how market economy and global economic changes affect the paradigms in his time. Born and raised in Richmond, Virginia, Wolfe is familiar with the history and memory of the South about labor and social issues. He was educated at Washington and Lee (B.A., 1951) and he earned his Ph.D. in American Studies at Yale (1957). In December 1956, he took a job as a reporter for the *Springfield Union*, in Springfield, Massachusetts. This was the beginning of a ten-year newspaper career, most of it spent as a general assignment reporter. For six months in 1960 he served as *The Washington Post*'s Latin American correspondent and won the Washington Newspaper Guild's foreign news prize for his coverage of Cuba. As a journalist and a fiction writer, Wolfe examines immigrant labor and the lives of immigrants. He entwines real life details and tells stories, and puts them into fiction to attract the attention of the audience to social problems in order to discuss changing paradigms in America. Wolfe's engagement with immigration starts with his novel *A Man in Full* and continues with his latest novel *Back to Blood* (2012), in which he analyzes the phenomena of immigration in depth and portrays Cuban immigrants in Miami.

In *A Man in Full*, Wolfe depicts Atlanta as the "capitalist production and literary representation of place in the American South" (Bone vii). In this sense, Atlanta becomes a city of capitalist investment after the 1960s. In *A Man in Full,* Wolfe, while portraying Atlanta as an international city with increasing global connections, carefully intertwines the factors that contribute to the emergence of this global city, one of which is globalization and immigration. To display the global connections, Wolfe intentionally creates a connection between California, where Croker Global has frozen food storing units, and other parts of the U.S. His protagonist, Conrad, embodies the global connection and immigrant labor to justify larger connections free of spatial and racial boundaries.

When viewed through the lens of labor issues, the novel functions a critique of modernity and how modern consumption and corporations exploit labor. Before he was laid off, Conrad was working for the California-based frozen unit of Croker Global, which was one of the biggest employers of unskilled labor in Atlanta, GA. Undocumented and unskilled labor is one of the main concepts that the text focuses on because, as the text depicts, unskilled labor becomes an easy prey for the market economy. Wolfe chooses a white middle-class protagonist who becomes a fugitive, an illegal immigrant, and travels to Atlanta to address social issues of exploitation of unskilled labor and squalid working conditions of immigrants. His further function is to display the shared history with the Vietnamese characters he stays with.

After being laid off from Croker Global, Conrad Hensley is involved in a fight and is imprisoned since he attacks security guards in the car towing area and injures one of them. He escapes from the prison after an earthquake. What is relevant for my argument about the ways Wolfe engages with labor issues and immigration is his involvement with illegal immigrants when

his friend Kenny helps him to reach the "underground airline," which is the reminiscent of slavery-era Underground Railroad (688). Wolfe, using a slavery-era image, refers the historical memory to depict "web of shared history" (Hinrichsen 584). Wolfe points to the fact that the numbers of undocumented and illegal immigrants increase every year. For that reason Conrad becoming a fugitive chooses to escape to Atlanta using the methods that undocumented immigrants use. Wolfe reminds the readers of the social fact that there are a considerable number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. The census of 2000 suggested that as many as nine million undocumented aliens lived in the United States (Dinnerstein et. al. 245). According to the report of Homeland Security Office of Immigration Statistics, there were over 11.5 million unauthorized immigrants were living in the U.S. in January 2011 (Hoefer et al. 1). This statistical data illustrates why Wolfe depicts undocumented immigrants, and also highlights the significance of his work as a social project.

Following his escape from prison, his friend Kenny takes Conrad to "Mai's 24-Hour Mini Market," which is run by a Vietnamese woman, Mai (Wolfe 485). Hong, a Chinese man, manages the shop when Mai works or sleeps in the office upstairs. When Kenny and Conrad arrive at the shop, Conrad realizes that all the customers in the shop are immigrants– a Chinese, two Sikhs, and three others with very dark skin (486). These immigrants create a web of communication and relations to help illegal immigrants to find their ways in this new land. At first Conrad's story, as a white, middle-class man seems out of place; however, his story is significant in displaying the undocumented immigration in the U.S. South.

Mai's shop highlights the significance of Vietnamese immigrant enclaves around the U.S. for illegal and unskilled newcomers, and emphasizes how networking among them helps the new immigrants to settle in a place and find a job. Network theories postulate that the existence of

family, friends, and acquaintances in a receiving country reduces the costs and risks of migration. Alejandro Portes et al. developed the ethnic enclave economy model, which is rooted in dual or segmented labor market theory. In relation to the enclaves, there are various labor market theories that explain the labor problem in these enclaves. According to Robert Edward et. al., for example, enclave theory postulates the existence of two separate and distinct labor markets. The first labor markets consists of good jobs, decent wages and secure employment, while the secondary labor market involves unskilled jobs, poor wages, and insecure employment (qtd. in Heisler 82).

I pull in network theory and secondary labor market theory in this section because both intertwine in a way that allows unskilled labor to be employed. Lacking the necessary skills for primary labor market employment and facing discrimination, immigrants are typically confined to employment in the secondary labor market where they are exploited as cheap labor and have less social mobility. In *A Man in Full*, the connection between network and secondary market theory explains the demographic and economic change in the region. As a corollary of networking, unskilled laborers travel to the U.S. South where a lot of food processing plants depend on unskilled immigrant labor.

A specific example to network and secondary labor theory in *A Man in Full* is Mai's shop, where illegal immigrants could get fake "IDs, fake licenses, fake Social Security cards, cell phone numbers, credit cards, green cards, plane ticket, jobs, whatever they need" (487). The intentional use of "Underground Railroad" refers to the history of labor and labor exploitation. From this perspective, Conrad's escape from Oakland to Atlanta through Mai's underground connection tells us a modern day Harriet Tubman story. Mai helps the fugitives to settle permanent places where they can find shelter and food because "Mai can get things organized for [Conrad]" in Atlanta,

(491). Wolfe consciously mirrors the southern history of labor exploitation using "underground flight." By making such an analogy, I argue, Wolfe might have insinuated that the circumstances of the immigrants, though they are paid and have limited mobility, are analogous to slave labor in southern history. Wolfe presents extension of history through exploited labor in the twenty first century processing plants, and it is a justification of labor exploitation in the South. Wolfe consciously mirrors southern history to raise awareness among his readers to create changes in the system that will enable immigrants and unskilled workers to access legal and humanely working conditions.

At this point, I argue that there are a few reasons why Wolfe chooses Conrad, as a middle-class white man, and why Conrad becomes a fugitive and travels like an illegal immigrant. By changing Conrad into an illegal immigrant, Wolfe reminds his audience of what Oscar Handlin, in his book *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (1951), emphasizes: "[O]nce I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history" (3). In this vein, Conrad becomes a representative of an illegal immigrant with a fake identity and reminds the audience that everybody in America can be regarded as an immigrant. My contention is that Wolfe successfully and provocatively problematizes the perceptions of immigrants and the mentality that "otherizes" them. I argue that if Wolfe had used an immigrant who travels through the "underground flight," this would have not created the desired changes among the readers. However, Conrad, as one of the American readers, creates a sense of "insider" perspective to analyze the "outsiders." The readers internalize Conrad's situation, considering that any of them can be in the same position, which enables them to empathize with the conditions of illegal immigrants. Thus, since it is

undeniable that there are millions of illegal immigrants in this country, Wolfe creates an understanding environment and urges his audience to internalize the conditions and search for possible ways to make life better for everyone living in this country.

To problematize the conditions in which immigrants live and work, the text shows how regional space has become a global space as a result of global economy when Conrad arrives at the racially segregated part of Atlanta, Chamblee. Conrad's symbolically becoming an illegal immigrant serves to shatter the demarcations that stigmatize and confine immigrants to "the secondary labor market," to use Robert Edward's phrase. The secondary labor market exemplifies alterity and results in segregating spaces in Atlanta. Thus, through Conrad, the text implies that the boundaries between immigrants and white Americans might be so porous that ignoring the working and living conditions of the immigrants would actually mean that Americans ignore their very existence and immigrants' future in the global American South where boundaries and identities become a syncretic hybridity.

To create desired empathy among the readers, Conrad falls into a category of the other. Conrad's escape through illegal "underground flight" to Atlanta aims to strengthen the alienation of immigrants as "others" and emphasizes the emotional side of illegal immigration. It is significant that Conrad's journey from Oakland via Portland to Atlanta involves a sophisticated transportation network that usually assists the passage of (often illegal) immigrants into and across the United States. His flight to Atlanta reminds the readers the overlooked fact of refugees and illegal immigrants. Upon arriving at Hartsfield International Airport, Conrad is met by his Vietnamese contact Lum Loc and taken to Chamblee, located in the northeast section of metropolitan Atlanta. Chamblee, Doraville, and Clarkston, where around ten thousand

Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong refugees settled during the 1980s, comprise a district that offers an alternative definition of Atlanta as an "international city –defined by its multicultural population, not the globalization of finance capital flows" (*Postsouthern,* Bone 210). Chamblee is the embodiment of how space has been changed in the twenty first century. Conrad's travel starts from California to explain this change.

By choosing California as a starting point for Conrad, Wolfe reiterates the significance of shared history and international immigrant flow in America. Wolfe not only delineates the despicable working conditions of immigrants but also takes the readers to the starting point of immigration flows. California has the highest East Asian immigrant population, legal and illegal. For some immigrants, California is the first step of their journey in America. Then, some of those immigrants choose new destinations where they can find jobs. Wolfe pinpoints that the developing food processing industry needs legal or illegal cheap and unskilled workers; it is one of the reasons why Conrad travels to the South. Wolfe's text provides a textual example of network theory when he shows how these immigrants establish an enclave and help each other to find job and a place to stay. After the fall of Saigon and the Vietnam War, immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, either legally or illegally, entered the United States. Many of these immigrants chose to travel to the South because they had acquaintances there that could introduce them to fishing jobs in Louisiana or to food (poultry) processing plants in Arkansas, Georgia, and Virginia, which sought cheap labor for their growing operations.

Food processing plants, fish farms, and broilers display the economically changing face of the region. Wolfe suggests that agricultural production in traditional Georgia has been replaced by food processing plants and broilers that grow livestock for the plants. The agrarian notion of place

has been appropriated with Croker's plantation farm "Turmptine." Wolfe accentuates the fact that agricultural production is decreased and transformed into a real estate development and food processing plants in the peripheral regions of the city. The transformation of agricultural industry to food processing or other sectors of the market is criticized when Charlie's ex-wife Martha comments that the land becomes "too valuable to be devoted to farming or timber" (511). Wolfe depicts the extent to which agricultural production in traditional, rural north Georgia has been replaced by food processing plants and finance-capitalist land speculation in contemporary, metropolitan Atlanta. Although the farm, "Turmptine," is reminiscent of historical plantations with its plantation house and black servants, it functions as a resort for the rich Croker family and explains one of the reasons why agriculture has shifted in the South.

There are ways in which Turmptine is the reminiscent of the plantation logic. In *Wounds of Returning* (2007), Jessica Adams explains that "strange and contradictory possibilities that slavery released into the realm of the normal still shape social spaces, including the reimagined plantation" (4-5). In *A Man in Full*, the Turmptine, symbolically, represents the perpetuation of old South myth with race and class distinctions and embodies the notion of "reimagined plantation." (Adams 5). Charlie Croker has a 29,000 acre quail-shooting plantation, and he states that he employs unskilled workers (mostly black) and claims that those black workers "would be without job if he does not maintain his farm, since "black workers tending the plants, horses, [….] tilling the soil, […] preserving the ecology" (515). The plantation logic is reimagined and given (seemingly) a new and more humane role as a source of employment for unskilled labor. Although there is still production in the farm, the main purpose of this production serves as the entertainment

of the elite class as Charlie Croker and his rich friends organize hunting parties in the farm. The black workers in the farm work to raise quail each of which costs $4000.

Another reason is that in reversing the underground flight to the South, Wolfe anachronistically and ironically depicts how plantation logic continues to shape the social spaces in the South, especially as Conrad ends up working for Charlie Crocker's farm. Wolfe thoughtfully connects "underground flight," with Turmptine, and labor exploitation, mirroring it to the historical memory of the region. Although the text describes that the farm is not used for agricultural purposes and black people do not toil in the fields, it is significant that Croker still employs black people to tend the farm and work for the house. Wolfe justifies how slavery's exploitative logic haunts the southern space under the disguise of market capitalism and social development. The fact that Croker spends millions of dollars to maintain the farm to hunt quails rather than using the land to produce agricultural products epitomizes the shift in agriculture business toward consumption. In the past the land was a source of income with cash products–cotton and tobacco–whereas Turmptine is a place of expenditure; it consumes rather than produces. The land is used for consumption not for production and in either cases the exploitation is perpetuated. Labor exploitation is used to increase consumption, which explains the basic drive behind the capitalist market economy. As the result of this drive, labor shifted from agriculture to more modern industry-based production plants and food processing factories in which mostly immigrants work.

Charlie Croker's remark that unskilled workers have few alternatives to work, either in fields and farms or in food processing plants portrays the shift in labor. Croker's situation is a reminiscent of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, in which "master's mastery depends upon the

laboring presence of the slave: should the master abjure that dependency and negate the slave" (qtd. in Godden 108). Wolfe uses Croker's paradoxical situation rhetorically so that the justification of labor exploitation can be conveyed to the audience in a more tangible form. Croker as a white upper-class businessman seems to disapprove of the idea of labor exploitation and distances himself from the plantation economy of the Old South. However, the fact that he employs black people on his farm and unskilled labor in his frozen food units, on the grounds that they lack adequate skills to be employed elsewhere, negates his denouncement; it serves to disguise his hidden intent to perpetuate labor exploitation and the aristocratic myth. Through this character, Wolfe denounces this fact and allows reader to encounter the reality of immigrant labor to see how the market economy exploits the unskilled labor force. Wolfe challenges the idea of preserving history in Croker's plantation and labor exploitation that is connected to the land in the South.

The shift in labor is the direct result of modern consumption and lifestyle changes, which results in a change in the forms of production and leads to the emergence of huge food processing plants. The expansion of poultry production occurred at a time when agricultural products such as cotton or tobacco lost its economic value for farmers. Producing cotton and tobacco takes considerable amount of time and energy; however, in the twenty-first century, at a time when everything moves and changes so fast, the market economy and global actors encourage people to find new sources which are more practical and would enable people to make more money in a short time. As a cliché, "time is money" becomes a motto for the twenty-first century. Changing demographics and developing cities, as in the example of Atlanta, created new opportunities for markets. Enlarging spatial borders of the cities, the development of new suburbs, and immigrant enclaves in the peripherals changed the eating habits of people as well.

As a result of these changes, farmers and producers initiated new businesses. They started broilers that would produce livestock in a short time so that they can meet the demands of the public. This new initiation brought new demands together. As farmers converted their farms to broilers, there was a need for cheap workers who would not complain about long working hours and unhealthy working conditions due to the fear of losing their jobs. In that case, immigrant labor arrives as a savior to the market as the immigrants sacrifice themselves for the sake of earning some money to take home. Wolfe problematizes the fact that though the economy has shifted, the main driving force is the same, namely, the act of exploiting labor. Croker, as a landowner, replicates labor exploitation in a reverse production–consumption dichotomy. Wolfe criticizes the ways in which these two competing models make the same mistake. In both systems workers become cogs in the machine. Although Croker represents caring plantation owner who considers the needs of the unskilled workers he employs, his drive for consumption and making more money becomes a symbol of market economy, causing him to ignore the needs of labor in the poultry business.

American consumption patterns have increased the demand for convenient food, triggering a sizeable expansion of the industry's unskilled labor force. The movement of the poultry industry towards southern states was initiated primarily by the resident labor force of African Americans and poorly educated whites from the Appalachians and the Ozarks. Arkansas, home to Tyson Foods, for example, produces more processed poultry than any other state in the South (Griffith 130). Tyson Foods, based in Springdale, Arkansas, is one of the leading poultry industries in America and is one of the main reasons why poultry industry developed especially in the South. There have been concerns rising about labor exploitation and the changing face of the region in

different segments of the society. The documentary *Food Inc.* (2009), produced by Robert Kenner, would be helpful here to demonstrate the background of the poultry industry and the labor need for the industry. Wolfe in *A Man in Full* and Kenner in *Food Inc.* simultaneously focus on how the poultry industry exploits both the small farm owners and immigrant. Wolfe and Robert Kenner in their social projects discuss that the shifting economy exploits everybody in the South. This is another reason why we should evaluate Wolfe's text as a social and political project rather than just a literary achievement.

Arguably, Wolfe and Kenner aim to create expected desire in the community. In this sense, their social responsibility and sensitivity to social problems reminds the audience *The Jungle.* When published, *The Jungle* created expected effect on the public and on State to regulate conditions in meat packing factories so that the working conditions of the immigrants could be better. From this standpoint, A *Man in Full* criticizes political and social ramifications to create a synergy among the audience to change perceptions on immigrants and consider them as a citizen with the same rights with an American. Wolfe, as a journalist, writes novels and reaches larger public to disseminate his opinions and convince his audience to unotherize the immigrant labor. Similarly, the influential film *Food Inc.* offers a new perspective on many issues such as immigrant workers, environmental impacts, and health concerns over genetically modified products. Kenner explores the subject from all angles, talking to authors, advocates, farmers, and CEOs, such as co-producer Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*), Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore's Dilemma*), Gary Hirschberg (Stonyfield Farms), and Barbara Kowalcyk, who has been lobbying for more rigorous standards since *E. coli* claimed the life of her two-year-old son. These perspectives are significant for my argument as they demonstrate the often-unsanitary working conditions of (immigrant)

workers in the processing plants and how the assembly system, as mentioned before, exploits the workers by compartmentalizing the assembly line which as a result needs an unskilled labor force.

In this documentary, the audience witness that after the decline of tobacco many farmers, especially in McLean County, Kentucky, turned to chicken farming. Most of the farmers have contracts with Tyson Foods. Kenner takes his camera into slaughterhouses and factory farms where chickens grow too fast to walk properly, cows eat feed pumped with toxic chemicals, and illegal immigrants risk life and limb to bring these products to a market that demands low prices. The documentary emphasizes why the South became a center of attraction for food processing businesses and, therefore, a center of attraction for cheap wage labor, which is mostly filled by immigrants. In parallel with Kenner's documentary, A *Man in Full* depicts that consumerist market economy can exploit all the parties associated with the production- consumer dichotomy. While Kenner shows that both immigrant laborers and farmers are exploited, Wolfe skillfully depicts that exploitative logic of the market economy is not limited to foreign-born workers. In this sense, Conrad embodies this notion and conveys the message that market economy considers everybody the same regardless of their race when it comes to the equation of work and surplus.

The poultry industry is another example that portrays how market economy exploits farmers who grow livestock rather than growing traditional cash products. The poultry market, as Steve Striffler explains, exploded after World War II, and poor farmers on declining cotton farms in Georgia and devastated apple orchards in Arkansas jumped at the chance to raise chickens (154). In *A Companion to American Immigration* (2006) Donna R. Gabaccia explains this shift in the following manner:

> Immigrants who escape agricultural labor find more permanent employment in food processing plants. The relocation of American meat packing and processing from older so-called rustbelt sites such as Chicago, Cincinnati, and Buffalo to newer locations in the Sunbelt […] has attracted new immigrant workers to areas where few comers ventured in the past. (454)

Chicken dominates the rural South and the South dominates chicken since major producers and processing companies are located in the South, which is one of the reasons why the U.S. South attracts so many unskilled immigrant labor. Developments in product lines created additional labor demands. Since 1945 American industries have undergone a number of structural changes. Employment in agriculture and manufacturing has shifted to services, due to the substitution of machinery for labor. Employment in poultry processing has increased over the past twenty years (Broadway 17). Worker productivity has been augmented by developing a disassembly line and increasing line speeds.

Another reason is that the region's mild climate provides year-round growing conditions and low energy costs for heating and cooling the houses where boilers are raised (Broadway 34). Many of the nation's small farmers are also found in the South. Broadway further explains that "many of the farmers in the region have contracts with large processing firms, such as Tyson and ConAgra, and they depend on family labor to raise chickens" (34). The contractors are asked to modify their farms, which put them in to debt every year turning the farmers into modern sharecroppers. Local farmers that engage in chicken farming under the contract with Tyson Food and immigrants working in the poultry industry are trapped in the same way by the capitalist market economy.

Since the employers are aware that immigrants and farmers depend on them, they do not take any initiative to ameliorate the conditions for the workers. This is a cost-benefit situation for

the employers because changing or improving the working conditions would increase the cost for the employers. For that reason, they are not willing to improve the conditions in the factories or food processing plants. In his article "We're all Mexican Here: Poultry Processing, Latino Migration, and the Transformation of Class in the South," Steve Striffler describes the seriousness of the squalid factories and their effect on human health. Striffler shows the inside of the poultry processing plants and strengthens Wolfe's argument that immigrants are coerced to work in processing plants under inhumane conditions. Striffler, for his field research as an anthropologist, enters Tyson Foods as a worker on the processing line. When he and the other ten newly recruited workers see the plant, Carmen, one of the new workers, exclaims, "My God […..] How can one work here?" (156). Striffler further describes the interior, "chickens are flooding into completely dark and uncomfortably warm room at about 200 in a minute. The smell is indescribable, suffocating, and absolutely unforgettable […] Blood, feces, and feathers are flying everywhere" (156). Similarly, Wolfe describes the inside of the poultry processing plant in Knowlton where Vietnamese immigrants work. He complicates the idea of processed food and draws attention to the conditions in which the food American society consumes is prepared and processed.

In *A Man in Full* highlights the significance of poultry processing within the paradigm of new immigration. Considering the global effects of economy and changing consumption habits, Wolfe in his international city Atlanta creates a poultry processing plant on the peripherals of the city. This approach involves and raises awareness on several social issues that modern U.S. South encounters. There is a connection between the location and labor supply. In relation to this perspective, the chicken processing plant is located in Knowlton, close to Chamblee, which is a peripheral district home to East Asian immigrants. The location of the plant enables unskilled labor

to travel easily and access the jobs offered in the plant. The processing plant is accessible to immigrants as they have a strong network that would help them to be employed. This is advantageous for the employer because they never worry about labor. Therefore, they can lay off anyone with whom they find unproductive. This creates a power over the workers, and this suppressive power implicitly forces the (immigrant) workers to obey the rules and work under surveillance.

At the poultry processing plant, the workers are exploited not only physically but psychologically as well. Foucault states that "the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so" (201). To maintain production in a capitalist exploitative system, the workers need to believe that they could be under surveillance any time. This fear would ensure that people would internalize the effect of panoptic tower and control themselves. Foucault explains this effect as "he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-3). The abundance of supply makes the surveillance a threatening force, which makes the workers work beyond their capacity at the fast moving assembly belt. Becoming a principle of one's own subjection is the ultimate point that the exploitative system dehumanizes workers. The immigrant workers in the food processing plant in Knowlton in *A Man in Full* embody the notion of this principle. They become a part of their own exploitation.

In his text, Wolfe highlights several aspects of immigration. It is not only the exploitation of labor that Wolfe criticizes; he also draws the labor issue into a larger agenda to the political and

economic relations around the Global South. The texts represent the inhumanity of classifying human beings as "undocumented" and forcing them to exist in a marginal space of constant hiding. As mentioned earlier, Wolfe addressees another aspect of the American connection to world history and the larger Global South by including Vietnamese immigrants in his work. When Saigon fell to communist forces in Vietnam, more than one hundred thousand people were airlifted out of the country by American military forces or made their way in small boats to the U.S. Navy ships in the South China Sea (Randazzo 579). In the introduction of *New American Destinies: A Reader in Contemporary Asian and Latino Immigration* (1997), editors Darrell Y. Hamamoto and Rodolfo D. Torres highlight the conditions and reasons that forced East Asian immigrants to move to the U.S. It is estimated that half a million of these "boat people" arrived in the U.S. Orange County, California, which became a center of Vietnamese American life (573). In addition to Orange County, many immigrants settled in places such as Arkansas, Texas, Virginia, and Louisiana. Wolfe in *A Man in Full* articulates how the American South became a multi-cultural and transnational space, and gives a panorama of Vietnamese settlement in America through a web of connections. For that reason, Conrad gets in touch with Vietnamese immigrants in California and travels to Atlanta through fake IDs provided by a Vietnamese working in Wisconsin.

Why does Wolfe specifically choose Vietnamese immigrants despite the fact that the majority of the poultry processing plant workers in America are Latino? Although the poultry workers across the US are predominantly Latino, Wolfe portrays the plant as a place in which only Vietnamese, Cambodians, or other Asian minorities are working. At first sight, his portrayal seems problematic, yet his intentional use of Vietnamese immigrants accentuates the significance of the shared history and emphasizes ongoing connections with Vietnam and the trauma of war. By

focusing on Vietnamese and East Asian immigrants, Wolfe thus highlights another history of the U.S. South and its connection to Global Souths. In their introduction to a collection of essays on new approaches to U.S. southern studies, Suzanne Jones and Sharon Monteith encourage scholars "to chart connections with 'other' Souths in ways that open up spaces and places from which we might read the region as a site of exchange" (10). They further propose that literary scholars in particular should attend to under-studied, other Souths that native writers have revealed as a surprisingly interconnected to the American South. Such links are clear in new Vietnamese immigrant writing like Robert Olen Butler's *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*, and Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full*. By not focusing on Latino workers, Wolfe is better able to draw connections to both war and other sources of migrant labor.

Studies of immigrant representation in southern literature and the South's connections to the other parts of the world have been considered from literary perspective recently. According to Peer Schmidt and Amritjit Singh, "U.S literature past and present is increasingly being studied within the context of the global literatures in English" (viii). They further state that "we may now be said to be in a 'transnational moment,' increasingly aware of the ways in which local and national narratives […] cannot be conceived apart from a radically new sense of our shared human histories and our growing global interdependence" (viii). Asian immigration can be understood from the perspective of emergence of American capitalism. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished former nation-origin quotas and exclusions, changed the Asian demographic of the U.S. As a result of demographic changes, the U.S interests, according to Lowe, have recruited and regulated both labor and capital from Asia (7). Lisa Lowe, in her discussion about Asian exclusion, in this particular genealogy of citizenship, correlates the development of

capitalist America with global western capitalism and Asian labor (ix). Similarly, Wolfe portrays the disenfranchisement of Asian labor. From a larger perspective, America's involvement in a war with Vietnam is the result of economic drives. As the result of this involvement, many Vietnamese had to leave their country and move to America where they are disenfranchised and worked under squalid conditions. These Vietnamese refugees settled in peripheral Atlanta, Chamblee, and formed their enclave where they are otherized and isolated from the community.

The district of Chamblee in *A Man in Full* is the literal embodiment of this exclusion, which problematizes the perpetuation of exclusion. In other words, Wolfe complicates the idea that national memory haunts the conception of the Asian American as "outsider[s] inside," to use Lan Cao's phrase. Thus, I argue, Wolfe's narration of Asian immigrants in the peripheral areas of Atlanta aims to highlight the illogic of disenfranchising and racial segregation of Asian immigrants as "others" outside of the social boundaries. Therefore, Wolfe's critique contributes to create a product of cultural integration and its interpretation on the national space. Wolfe situates Asian immigrants, and therefore the immigrant work force, in the peripheral, emphasizing the fact that they are outside the cultural and racial boundaries of the nation.

Vietnamese immigrants are not the only way to delineate shared history. Some of the characters in the book have connections with East Asia, either through the War itself or through the people they are working with. Hary Zale, for example, who is the head of the real Estate Asset Management Department at PlannersBanc, "had been in the Marines during the war in Vietnam" (45). Charlie Croker also served during the Vietnam War after he graduated from the college. Croker after his great success as a "Sixty Minute Man" goes to "fight off in Vietnam" and is involved in a "firefight" (582). Croker's connection is not only through the War but also through

the Philippino nanny Heidi and the Woo dynasty from Far East immigrants who help at home – "Nina Woo, her sister Jarmine, the house keeper, and Jarmine's son Lin Chi" (137). Lowe argues that the Vietnam War "shook the stability and coherence of America's understanding of itself" in a manner unprecedented in the twentieth century (3). It radically altered the unities of community, nation, and culture. Lowe explains that these unities are changed "due to the traumas of death, loss, and breakdown as well as understandings about racial groupings, class identities and notions of masculinity and femininity" (3). Wolfe, by blurring the boundaries, contributes to a revised understanding of America itself, and encourages his audience to comprehend the fact that so long as the immigrants and shared histories are "otherized," the process of understanding ourselves would be hindered.

Wolfe is thus purposefully engaged in portraying the Vietnamese immigrants and the Vietnam War so that the audience can understand and "come to terms" with an American history of wars and its history of labor exploitation. Wolfe, by creating a kind of "historiographic metafiction," to use Linda Hutcheon's term, utilizes the power of fiction to articulate the traumatic historical events in a way historical records cannot (5). The Vietnamese and other East Asian immigrants in *A Man in Full* reflect the historical facts behind East Asian immigrations. Those immigrants mostly come from a non-literate and agrarian background and have no opportunities other than working in low wage jobs that white middle-class Americans do not desire. Wolfe ingeniously blends the stories of immigrants, post-Vietnam War connections, and changing spatial characteristics in urban Atlanta.

The spatial and commercial change in the segregated part where immigrants mostly live is explicit in the signs of the shops in Chamblee when Conrad emphasizes the "difference" and

"otherness" produced in space. He notices that "many shops had no English at all in their signs," most of them were written in symbols Conrad cannot perceive which language they were written in: "Thai? Cambodian? Laotian? Korean? Vietnamese? A big sign on a metal stanchion said ASIAN SQUARE" (519, emphasis in original). Bone explains that "although Chambodia allows these immigrants to maintain a place-specific sense of identity and community and despite the international origins of the heterogeneous populace, the district is distinctly segregated from the 'international city.' Conrad is struck by how the built landscape of immigrant–owned businesses around Buford Highway is "another world" (519). Wolfe smartly focuses on the significance of place. The narrator describes how spatial borders divided racial spaces in Atlanta. "Ponce de Leon was the avenue that divided black from white on the east side of the town" (185), while the MARTA line divided the immigrant space of Chamblee from other parts of the town. This segregation is portrayed through Conrad's experience in Chamblee when "[Conrad] walked through that underpass and on the other side… another world!"(519).There is a correlation between Wolfe's attitude and what Ray Hudson argues; namely, that "labor is the most place-based of the factors of production" (122).

If businesses employ a specific type of labor in a specific place, it means that the work is connected to "distant others within national, international and global space economy" (Castree et. al., xiii). The spatial changes in the geography of the region, while allowing the survival of cultural and ethnic characteristics, have political and economic results. Although there seems an appropriating and transformation of the space by the Asian immigrants by inscribing shop names in Vietnamese or any other language and renaming the region "Chambodia" (515), the immigrants' freedom is restricted; they have limited social mobility. Wolfe depicts the ways in which

immigrants are subjected to political and economic suppression in the new land. In this vein, this suppressive and controlling force, the panopticon, can be either employers or the state itself. At the poultry plant the immigrant workers are under the surveillance of the employers, or sometimes they are ironically under their own surveillance.

The immigrants are under the government surveillance outside the work place. Police surveillance is one of the ways that Wolfe portrays state authority on immigrants. The Cambodians' status as second-class citizens becomes evident via this intervention. It is striking that Conrad, even though he is an escaped convict and has a fake ID and driver's license to disguise his identity, is in a much better position when compared to illegal immigrants as they have no chance to disguise themselves due to their appearance. Lum Loc explains the authorial pressure and the effect of the "panopticon" on immigrants when he articulates that immigrants "cannot always walk around doing nothing in Chambodia" (518). Loc's perception of state authority implies that so long as the immigrants have employment, no one would interrogate their status because this policy requires them to be inside and stay invisible. Wolfe dramatizes this invisibility of illegal immigrants through small rooms of rented accommodation, "the tiny living room was packed with people, with Vietnamese–must be fifteen or sixteen at least […] with at least eight or nine Vietnamese crammed into it" (515-16). They are confined to inside and they cannot transform the space in a powerful way. So long as they are invisible, they are free from the surveillance of the state. This is another form of dehumanization because the fear of control and surveillance force them to stay invisible by isolating them from social and cultural life.

Wolfe recasts regional identity into a larger global framework by bringing the crucial impact of immigrant labor and immigrants to light via one of the South's significant industries.

Vietnamese immigrants invariably have to "work on the assembly line" at the "very big chicken plant in Knowlton" (517). Southeastern Asians occupy the local job market and their labor relation redefines the space in Chamblee. In an interview with Peter Robinson, Wolfe explains that he is interested in "how immigrants actually feel, how their social structure is like if such a thing exists" (Robinson). Wolfe problematizes the exploitative labor practices of the South's poultry industry, and poignantly complicates southern race relations by highlighting the borders and relations with racial groups in Atlanta. The immigrant workers in Chamblee, knows as Cambodia in Atlanta, transformed the city from binary racial modes to multiethnic spaces.

Conrad, upon his arrival to the Chamblee, meticulously observes this transformation, which is portrayed when Lum Loc takes Conrad from the airport. They drive to Chamblee which is "better they call Saigon West! Know what they call Chamblee, Chambodia" (515). Conrad feels himself "alien… in this strange place" (516). The visible qualities of the immigrant spaces serve to imbue place with personal memory and meaning. Conrad's visual perception marks the difference between the dilapidated apartments and workspaces of the Vietnamese and the highly luxurious mansions of the rich white Atlanta businessmen. Through Conrad's perception, Wolfe highlights how dirt and decay become signifiers of the marginalized immigrant families and the spaces they occupy in the South. Wolfe shows that local people living around the immigrants are aware of the conditions in which immigrants work. It is a significant point that local people seem to accept immigrants as "others" and ignore the dirt in which the immigrants have to work. For example, the man in the antique shop that Conrad visits states that those people from Cambodia work for the chicken plant in Knowlton and admits that "won't no white man work there and no

black man, either, these days. So they wants the Orientals, but they don't want'em living in Knowlton, so they park'em in Chamblee and Doraville" (626).

In the light of this quotation, I want to reiterate my argument that Wolfe intentionally engages in a social critique of "othering" the immigrants. For that reason he uses a non-standard dialect of a white speaker to strengthen his message. The southern dialect is marginalized and considered as the symbol of backward South –"not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it" (Cash viii). Southerners are frequently discriminated against in other parts of the U.S. when they speak in their native manner. Thus, Wolfe's strategy of using a southern accent allows his white audience to internalize and remember the feeling of what discrimination means. In addition, using tinges and characteristics of black vernacular, such as the double negative "won't no," and as a singular verb with a plural subject, such as "they wants," Wolfe aims to blur racial boundaries. The speaker empathizes with the immigrants and that is, I argue, what Wolfe strategically engages in, because they have a shared experience of being exploited or socially disadvantaged. By foregrounding this perception, Wolfe creates challenges for his readers in order to experience new textual dynamics and perceive and accept the "otherness" of the immigrants as essential characteristics of the American nation. He criticizes the systemic "otherization" of immigrants which, in the white men's psyche, aims to preserve hegemonic models of community. For that reason, Wolfe aims to create awareness among his white readers so that his readers can humanize the "Other."

A Man in Full is not only a piece of literature, but also a social and political project that aims to create desired behavioral changes among readers. Wolfe implies that for logical and economic reasons, most American consumers chose not to be reminded of the facts of the poultry

industry. After Conrad arrives in Chamblee, Lum Loc suggests him that he find a job. Conrad tells the old man in the antique shop that he wants to work in the chicken plant. The old man's reaction is "Naw, naw, naw….the smell'll finish you off all by itself" (626-7). "The smell of thousands of chickens with their intestines hanging out" correlates with Striffler's description of the poultry processing plant (627). Striffler's and Wolfe's overlapping descriptions and ideas show that there is a common point that aims to highlight labor exploitation and immigrants from different perspectives and sciences. The old man problematizes the notion that white men cannot work under these conditions and only immigrants can endure such horrible conditions. The reason is that immigrants generally do not have a union or binding job description that can stand up for their rights. In other words, these conditions strip off the humanity of the workers and dehumanize them as the "other."

Wolfe displays the maximization of profit and labor power that is the implementation of Taylorism in the poultry processing plant in Knowlton. Lum Loc describes the jobs that the immigrants do in the food processing plants as some "slit the chickens' throats all day, some slit their bellies and dis-emboweled them all day, and some took their feathers all day and some slice them into parts all day" (518). Through Lum Loc's perspective, Wolfe exemplifies how Taylorization is used in food processing factories. The assembly line or the conveyor belt enables the utmost economic efficiency by defining the repetitive work that workers have to do during the day. This narrative "integrates the sides of bodily exploitation as constitutive parts of the value labor, as well as the process in which immigrant workers become a political subject" (Lowe 156). Wolfe aims to create an image of food processing factories in the popular imagination as an

enterprise of exploitation with unsanitary conditions, low wages, sometimes-shocking incidents, and product adulterations.

There are a few ways why we should read Wolfe's text as more than a literary project. Although Wolfe writes mostly for journals, he engages in writing novels as social and political projects to convey his ideas to his audiences in order to create a synergy and to produce desired outcomes in the behaviors of the community towards some issues. I argue that Wolfe's text problematizes the southern history of labor exploitation and intentionally delves into the global connections between the American South and Global Souths due to the shared history. By writing on shared history and setting bridges between Vietnam and the U.S. South through the Vietnam War and Vietnamese immigrants, Wolfe supports the scholars who argue that the scope of the southern literature should be enlarged, composed of Global South and the Caribbean (Bone, Cohn, Monteith, and Jones). From this viewpoint, Wolfe's text, through its depiction of Chamblee, testifies to the changing spaces in the South and displays that the American South is becoming a multicultural South with its historical, political and economic ties to larger Global Souths.

To illustrate the shift, Wolfe uses Vietnamese immigrants to show historical connections and explain the reason why many legal and illegal immigrants from East Asia come to the U.S. As a contemporary southern fiction, *A Man in Full* enables the audience to perceive the global connection of the South. Moreover, the text problematizes the perpetuation of plantation economy and labor exploitation through Croker's plantation "Turmptine" and the poultry industry. In that sense, *A Man in Full,* as a social project, problematizes capitalist exploitation of and the dehumanization of unskilled labor, the segregation of space, and discrimination. Wolfe toys with the idea of exploitation of labor and exposes his audiences with historical, political, and racial

examples. *A Man in Full* powerfully communicates the theme of immigrant labor by providing a white middle-class American character and by narrating the story through his experience and perspective.

Chapter 3

Plantation Nostalgia: Immigrant Labor, Casino Industry, and Historical Trauma in *The Celestial Jukebox*

Through exploring traditional immigrant narrative structures and deep-rooted labor problem in the U.S. South, this chapter seeks to analyze the ways in which *The Celestial Jukebox* (2005) celebrates global and multicultural U.S. South by addressing multiple histories of the region. In that sense, the chapter turns its gaze to a different perspective of labor in the U.S. South and its historical connections while exploring the current condition of global capitalism, the casino industry, immigrant labor, the role of historically rooted labor exploitation, and labor trauma in Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox*. In this sense, the text depicts historical connections between the U.S. South and Africa through the African immigration and the way the Mauritanian character, Boubacar, travels to America. I argue that Boubacar's travel is reminiscent of traditional immigrant narratives, which portray immigration as a quest for economic prosperity and freedom. I look through the lens of traditional immigrant narratives to discuss how readers might best interpret contemporary immigration and casino labor in the U.S. South. In relation to this purpose, I seek to uncover some of the deeper transformations such as the perpetuation of plantation logic, displacement, and historical connections occurring beneath the surface of Lucky Leaf Casino and immigrant labor in *The Celestial Jukebox.* By doing so, this chapter, through its unpacking of troubled southern psychology, focuses on immigration and its global connections to deconstruct historical and economic exploitation of human labor in the South.

Set in the fictional twenty-first century town of Madagascar, Mississippi, *The Celestial Jukebox* envisions a new southern landscape with immigrants and the casino business, yet paradoxically repeats the legacy of exploitation. The setting, Madagascar, is a microcosm of the new U.S. South and mirrors many spatial and demographic changes that have to come to the American South as a whole. Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer discuss Madagascar as a clear representation of the Global South, "not as an enclave of hyperregionalism but a porous space through which other places have always circulated" (679). The South demographically became a multicultural and hybrid space in which the black and white dichotomy is shattered with the arrival of various ethnic immigrants. In other words, *The Celestial Jukebox* explores the multicultural South through an array of characters and backgrounds, and portrays a panorama of immigrants in the contemporary South while offering a global connection through these immigrants. Bringing these diverse immigrants to Madagascar, Shearer manages to depict more vibrant and pluralistic aspects of the global U.S. South.

In this sense, *The Celestial Jukebox* challenges and complicates perceptions about the undiversified characterization of the region. In other words, the text disavows the ideas that the U.S. South is "anti-intellectual, impervious to change and racist" (McPherson 10). In contrast, the text portrays diverse cultures and an economically developing South. However, while exploring multicultural hybridity, the text at the same time problematizes the abuses and exploitations of the modern day capitalist approach of market economy, which considers surplus as the most important outcome. Thus, the text consistently depicts land and labor exploitation, as rooted in the history of the region, capitalism, dislocation, and colonialism. While portraying the South as a place integrated into a capitalist economy which brings great many opportunities as well as

insurmountable problems, *The Celestial Jukebox* can be read as a social critique of the maintenance of exceptional status of the region which correlates the relation between the antebellum South and contemporary capitalist economy.

In addition to these preliminary aspects, the text captures the contrapuntal rhythms[3] of contemporary immigrants struggling to reconstruct identities in the South. Contrapuntal reading, developed by Edward Said, analyzes intertwined histories and perspectives. This approach is important in making connections between the U.S. South and the larger Souths. In other words, reading contrapuntally allows us to read the text(s) from different perspectives simultaneously. By bringing many characters from various ethnic diversities, *The Celestial Jukebox* constructs an active hybrid and liminal space which offers a contrapuntal reading and problematizes "othering" the immigrants. Regarding various ethnic immigrants, Shearer addresses political, social and economic issues through her choices of characters: Boubacar, a young Mauritanian Muslim who comes to America to join his uncles, Teslem and Salem, and yearns to play the blues; African elements and the blues intermingled to create hybridity and new cultural space that embraces new formations; Angus Chien, a Chinese immigrant who runs a small store near Madagascar; Dean Fondren, a long-time white farmer whose wife has left him for reasons neither understands; a dissatisfied housewife neglected by her husband and children; a man who collects and repairs jukeboxes; a street gang; an eccentric elderly artist who makes bird houses and lines their interiors

[3] In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Edward Said defines the term as reading a text "with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England" (66). Interpreting contrapuntally is interpreting different perspectives simultaneously and seeing how the text interacts with itself as well as with historical or biographical contexts. In this sense Boubacar, The Wastrel, Angus Chien along with many others in the text simultaneously reflect different perspectives on immigration and labor in the South.

with the great books of the western world and who claims to be the daughter of Matisse; Honduran farm workers; Aubrey Ellerbee, an African American farmer with a gambling problem, and Peregrine Smith-Jones, an African-American college student with family roots in the area, comes back to document "the South." Ariadne, long dead at the time of the novel's events, was an African American midwife who helped bring many of the Mississippi natives into the world.

Through these characters, the text portrays the amalgamation and interaction of various cultures to reveal a transnational American landscape: a pluralistic nation-state with porous boundaries that enable immigrants, exiles, and diasporic wanderers to travel to the region. Ariadne, for example, named for the woman in Greek myth who is turned into a spider, weaves a metaphoric web of relationships, links, connections, and consequences that are focal points of the novel. Shearer uses Ariadne as a lynchpin character who depicts the fundamental shared history of all inhabitants of Madagascar. In this sense, *The Celestial Jukebox* unfolds as a contemporary history of immigration and displacement juxtaposing the arrival of immigrants to Mississippi and the Indian removal from Mississippi. This arrival and displacement are depicted through the casino business. The "gambling company" sends offer letters to all around the casino to buy their lands and displace them as Angus explains the company "[talks] about buying everybody out" (37). This purchase reminds historical transactions and its "auspicious meanings to Americans" (17). Among these auspicious meanings, the collective memory is reminded of the displacement of Native Americans who later initiated mostly casino business in Oklahoma.

In this regard, there are many tensions in the casino and its establishment in an old plantation. The text sets up the casino through Angus's point of view as "a fat, money-sucking larval colony on the landscape" (129), and the customers are described as "casino trash" (347).

Through these negative annotations, I read the casino as a critique of the haunting logic of plantation economy, and argue that the casino reclaims the lands that were taken from Native Americans when white elite class of the South started to establish plantations and forced the Native Americans to move to Oklahoma. In other words, setting up a casino business in an old plantation the text faces the fact that, as Jessica Adams writes, the "past itself may return, inflicting new wounds and reopening old ones," and offers a remedial critique to the historical traumas of the region (5).

Immigration to Mississippi

My overall project is interested in contemporary representation of immigration and labor through contemporary immigrant narratives, but in this chapter I analyze *The Celestial Jukebox* through the lens of the traditional immigrant narrative schema in order to look at the ways in which the traditional immigrant narrative portrayed immigrant life. I argue that, though it is a contemporary text which uses amalgamation of traditional and modern immigrant narratives, the methodology that Shearer uses mostly follows the conventions of traditional narrative because *The Celestial Jukebox* chimes in with traditional immigrant narratives in a way that the text through its immigrant subjects strongly emphasizes the U.S. as the ideological "promised land" and the role of ethnospaces in assimilating the subjects. In this respect, the text offers a point of comparison for the new immigrant narratives discussed in other chapters of this study. In order to understand the ways in which the ideologies of the traditional immigrant narrative have persisted, it is useful to place it in conversation hegemonic immigrant narratives from the past. In contemporary immigration narratives, the main reason behind immigration is political rather than economic as in the case of the Cuban exile in *Holy Radishes*, Vietnamese immigrants in *A Man in Full*, and

South Indian family in *Mississippi Masala*. However, the immigrants in *The Celestial* come to America to achieve their American dream; for better job opportunities, which leads to classify *The Celestial* as a traditional immigrant narrative. In this sense, I will utilize William Q. Boelhower's (1991) theory of stages in immigrants' lives in the new world to analyze Boubacar's immigrant experience and assimilation within the scope of traditional immigrant narratives. Then I will focus on the casino business and portray the perpetuation of the plantation logic in modern spaces through immigrant labor and Aubrey Allerbee, an African American farmer.

The Celestial Jukebox's main occupation with immigration is to show that immigrants from various backgrounds and cultures transform both individual and national cultural identity, which negotiates regional identity and culture. In other words, the text creates a pluricultural worldview through their religions, folklore, foods, music, and gatherings, which together mirror the collective consciousness of immigrant groups. Somalian food and Mexican food enrich food culture of the text. For example, Consuela, a Honduran woman who works for Angus, cooks "tamale" that Angus could not remember when he had such delicious ones before (92). In addition to food, their dances as well as The Wastrel's and Boubacar's music creates a pluralistic musical aura that intermingles African, South American and American music. The Chinese grocery functions as a hub and portrays the U.S. South as multicultural New South. Thus the immigrants enrich and expand the borders of social order and community projecting a grand narrative, a historical actuality.

The fact that the immigrants in the text are mostly employed in the casino business revisits the old wounds in the psyche of the region by turning the immigrants into commodities that can be bought and sold. The casino offers incentives to the immigrant Africans that they cannot refuse such as working in a place with "air conditioning" and wearing "tuxedos" (35). Aubrey Allerbee

criticizes the new African immigrants as he "*can't get 'em"* work in his field in the sun; they prefer to be inside and make good money. (35) The casino occupies an old plantation in which slaves were bought and sold as commodities to perform the hard labor in the fields. In the modern southern town of Madagascar, the casino business fetishizes plantation nostalgia through tourism agencies, which bring tourist from all over the world. For example, a group of German tourists visit Madagascar and ask Dean to "*show [them] please where you kept the slafe!"* (103).

There are several incentives behind employing immigrant labor which casino industry takes the advantage of. As Cornelius Wayne explains, "immigrants are willing to do low-pay work that is boring, dirty, or dangerous with little or no prospects for upward mobility and that even in firms involving highly advanced technologies such work is critical" (102). Employers perceive them quite favorably–as reliable, flexible, punctual, and willing to work overtime. Immigrant transnational labor recruiting networks are powerful method for delivering eager new recruits to the employer's doorstep with little or no effort on his part. The Mauritanian immigrants in the casino business and Honduran farm workers are employed in Madagascar as their labor is cheap and they do not have many alternatives to work elsewhere.

Interestingly enough, these immigrants are eager to work under the exploitative conditions. In regard to low wage policy and the region's paradoxical situation, James Cobb, in his article "Beyond the 'Y'All Wall': The American South goes Global," points out that "although wages in the South […] are well below the U.S average […] in the broader global context the South has become a high-wage region" (4). Paradoxically enough, although it offers low-wage labor, the region attracts immigrants because they find the wage still higher than that of in their homelands. As Boubacar admits, "*casino money is very good in my village*" (23, emphasis in the original).

Boubacar's statement and the discourse he utilizes are contained within the rhetoric of immigration that emphasizes the economic relationship that exists between immigration and labor. This paradigm shift can be understood easily if the "labor [...] is understood as historically changing through forms of bondage to waged 'freedom'" (Godden 3). The movement of people during the second Great Migration from rural to southern cities or to the North following the Great Migration created a huge demand for labor which was partly satisfied by millions of immigrants from different parts of the world. During this migration over five million people moved from rural South to the North or West.[4] In contemporary immigration patterns, immigrants arrive to the region as a result of political and economic upheavals around the world. There are several questions that need to be answered to understand the reasons of immigration to the region: What are the reasons that immigrants preferred the South? Or why did the South employed or attracted such a large number of immigrants after the 1965 Immigration Act?

The South offered cheap land and cheap labor for international corporations, such as Nissan, Toyota, and Mercedes to build factories in the region. With the transformation of field works into industrial areas, the work force in the agricultural fields is filled with immigrants coming from poor parts of the world. During the 1970s the region became a center of growth and economic expansion, attracting new industries and stimulating urban growth by means of a variety of factors including its lower cost of living, improved consumer services, and changing racial attitudes. Equally important were the region's weak labor unions and right-to-work policies, its cheap labor force, and a widespread campaign of image-building boosterism by southern cities

[4] William H. Frey, "The New Great Migration: Black Americans' Return to the South, 1965–2000", The Brookings Institution, May 2004, pp. 1–3

(McPherson 13-14). In a 2008 *American Prospect* article "Black and Brown Together" David Bacon states that the source of immigration for Mississippi is the casino industry. Here David Bacon argues that immigrant workers from Florida arrive in Mississippi as construction workers to build casinos in 1991 when Mississippi has passed a law permitting the casino business (2). Following their construction, the casinos continued to use the immigrant workers to fill their growing labor needs. The fact that casinos recruited immigrant labor to fill the chasm in their work place is not a result of lack of labor in the region; rather, they prefer immigrant labor because it is cheap and easy to manipulate and control as they do not have any unionization. In this regard, *The Celestial Jukebox* traces the arrival of cheap immigrant labor to the South. Therefore, I argue that the immigrant labor in casino is the reconfiguration of antebellum peonage in the form of low-wage labor. In contemporary immigration patterns, immigrants arrive, as Bacon mentioned in his article, for better job opportunities in the U.S. South when compared to their own lands. The casino business, which is one of the most important business sectors in the South, enabled the immigrants to work both in the construction of the casinos and to work for the casino. Symbolically, the casino business reclaims the old plantation and the land that Native Americans sold a century ago.

When the immigrants arrive in the U.S., they experience some certain stages of adaptation to the culture or acculturation. William Q. Boelhower[5], in his essay "The Immigrant Novel as Genre," identifies the macroproposition of the immigrant novel as "an immigrant protagonist(s), representing an ethnic world view, comes to America with great expectations and through a series

[5] Boelhower writes that, "in light of genre expectations, the reader is led primarily to familiarize himself new ethnic values and traditions and to naturalize these differences as an integral part of the American experience" (12). He explains that the reasons for immigrating are expressed in all immigrant novels and are seen an essential part of the narrative model. Such reasons, he states, are naturally a part of the moment of expectation.

of trials she/he is led to reconsider them in terms of his/her final status" (5). For him, there are three major moments that immigrant subjects experience: Expectation, Contact, and Separation. In the expectation stage, immigrants have desires and dreams to achieve in the host country, while in contact stage, they experience facts and have chance to try what they have encountered. In the last stage, separation, there are three alternatives that immigrants can experience: assimilation, hyphenation, or alienation.

Boubacar is the embodiment of these stages. *The Celestial Jukebox* follows the story of Boubacar from his hometown in Africa where a white Quaker from Harvard purchases "Boubacar's freedom" from his mother and "finances his trip to Mississippi" (22).

> A white Quaker man from Harvard, which was in Massachusetts, which is in America, had put cash into his mother's hand to purchase Boubacar's freedom and finance his trip to Mississippi. Television cameras from America had filmed the white man from Harvard buying him to set him free, signing his papers. […] when the white man from Harvard had left for Morocco taking the French television cameraman, his mother had used the money to purchase a little Sudanese refugee girl to fetch the water every day. (22)

Boubacar's purchase perpetuates the idea that people are seen as commodities. His purchase, which "television cameras from America had filmed the white man […] buying him to set him free, signing the papers," is a reminiscent of slavery narratives in which African slaves were bought by Northern philanthropist and set free. In other words, the Quaker plays the role of abolitionists and sets the slave free. Ironically, Boubacar's mother uses the money to purchase a slave for herself, which is presented as a typical master behavior in the South. In this sense, the texts uses slavery and emancipation rhetoric. After the purchase, Boubacar's travel reminds the readers of the arrival of African Americans to the U.S. South. With his arrival to Madagascar, this association continues as his uncles work in a casino, which is seen as a "neoplantation" in modern Mississippi

because the casino "performs selective gestures to the old South" ("Narratives" Bone 71). Merle Purty in his article "The Renaissance of Southern Plantation" coins the idea of "neoplantation" as an "adaptation of the plantation model for the mid-twentieth century" (459) One of the gestures to the "neoplantation" in *The Celestial Jukebox* is that the casino is established in an old plantation with many references to the plantation life and the Old South. Boubacar travels to the "promised land," and his first impressions about the U.S. begin with "mesmerizing" effect of TV commercials (46). In the expectation stage, Boubacar arrives in the U.S. with the hope of fulfilling a version of American dream. He states that "[he] will be having money in America" (24). In the traditional immigrant narrative, America as the "shining city on a hill"[6] has been a prevailing ideological tool. Shearer extends this metaphor with a chapter "Golden Cities, Golden Towns" (64). Boubacar arrives in these golden cities and towns to achieve his dream.

Boubacar's story portrays the stages that an immigrant experiences while trying to achieve the American Dream. Boubacar's name is a conventional indicator of his old world provenance. He, as an immigrant subject, is alien, uprooted, naïve and ignorant of American life and all its facets, has language barrier, unassimilated and is hopeful. These are the conventional

[6] The term was first used by John Winthrop in *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630), in Settlements to Society: 1584-1763, at 66, 68 (Jack P. Greene ed., 1966). He states "For wee must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eies of all people are uppon us. Soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee haue undertaken, and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word through the world." Later, the term is mostly associated with President Ronald Reagan, who used the term in his farewell speech: "And how stands the city on this winter night? . . . After 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true on the granite ridge, and her glow has held steady no matter what storm. And she's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home." President Ronald Reagan, Farewell Address to the Nation, 2 PUB. PAPERS 1718, 1722 (Jan. 11, 1989).

characteristics of an immigrant protagonist in traditional immigrant narratives. In the contact stage, Boubacar, mostly through watching and imitating the TV commercials, invests in the ideology of America as a land of opportunities and discovers American culture. Watching the commercials in a mesmerized condition, repeating the words, and trying to pronounce them in the style of a native speaker, are the initial traces of contact stage which insinuates the beginning of assimilation as well. He learns new phrases such as "straight off the boat" (24) and uses them frequently. These initial contacts imply the effect of commercials and consumerist economy. However, what Shearer creatively introduces into her narrative is the function of "the role of media networks in mediating and determining immigrants' relation to nation, diaspora, and homeland" to question transnational and transcultural changes (Knippling xviii).

Boubacar's journey reaches a final phase in which he, as the immigrant protagonist, starts to reconcile the tension between the Old World and the New World and its values. The final reconciliation reflects the position of a character in traditional immigrant narratives in which the protagonists generally attempt to hold on to the new world culture and being assimilated in to this new world leaving the old one behind. *The Celestial Jukebox*, in this sense, is written in traditional linear structure in which the immigrant protagonist follows Boelhower's three stages. To display the stages and their effect on individuals, Shearer, as E.L. Doctorow did in his famous novel *Ragtime,* describes the living conditions of the contemporary immigrants in a way that some of them refuse the sentimental and nostalgic perception of America as a dreamland, while others embrace it. In this sense, *The Celestial Jukebox* follows the trajectory of *Ragtime* and portrays the conditions of immigrants and their struggle to achieve the American Dream. While Doctorow portrayed European immigration and the living conditions in the North, Shearer turns the gaze to

the contemporary U.S. South and connects the immigration to global actors while portraying societal changes in contemporary South. By delving into the casino business and immigrant imagery, Shearer shows the exploitative strategy for the hegemonic power to maintain economic monopoly. Shearer convincingly establishes an evident chain of microstructural contiguities so that the physiognomy of the immigrant labor can dominate other possible topics in the text. In this sense, the text problematizes the fact that immigrants constitute the very labor for an expanding American capitalism and through this capitalist economy and pride in American citizenship.

The narrative of the text uses its portrayal of mediascapes, to borrow Arjun Appadurai's phrase, to portray and problematize the Americanization of the immigrants. In the contact stage, Boubacar, watches TV and meets the American culture. However, the text complicates this contact as "America emptied itself into the room," as if the TV regurgitates all the miseries of consumerist economy into Boubacar's room. The mediascape becomes a form of "schooling [Boubacar] in the ways of Americans" as it creates perception among the viewers (110). The Americanization process starts with the first scenes as Boubacar "was eating like an American" in his uncles' kitchen (45). The criticism against such Americanization is given through the moment when Boubacar meets old Sufi the Wastrel. The TV in Wastrel's room "was on but the sound was off" (112). Symbolically, having the TV on acknowledges the existence of the culture at subjective level, yet turning the sound off is the Wastrel's resistance to the schooling of the American way of thinking and living. The Wastrel believes that the mediascape has a hypnotic effect on viewers. Through advertorials, people are encouraged to spend more on things they do not need. Worse than that, this mediascape plays a significant role in instilling Americanization, which may lead to assimilation or acculturation of the immigrants. Thus, through its mesmerizing effect, the

mediascape turns people into commodities because for the Wastrel, "*to L'Américain, everything is commodity"* (117). The Wastrel criticizes the exploitative aspect of commercials, which instill immigrants' values that do not align with their own cultural and traditional values. As a conservative mind, the Wastrel tries to save Boubacar from the influence of American culture, so he turns down the volume of the TV while it is still on.

It is in this contact stage that Boubacar sees the silver *National Steel Guitar* and the mesmerizing old celestial jukebox in the Chinese grocery store. The jukebox and the guitar are central tropes that play a key role in Boubacar's Americanization since he is into music. The Wastrel is afraid that music can be a tool in Americanization of the young boy and warns him to "*stay away from American music*" (117). Because of the Wastrel's conservative and protective attitude, Boubacar decides to say nothing about his job at the Celestial because it was the place that he could listen to all the songs that "he had not herd yet" (117). He starts working at the grocery at nights in return of "food an such like," which gives him an opportunity to play music in the jukebox. Since he does not have a green card to work, Angus states that "can't no cash pass between [them]" until he gets a green card (49). Thus, Boubacar becomes a part of immigrant labor at the age of fifteen by sweeping the floor and getting the stove ready for the next day. It is in this stage that Boubacar also learns basic dynamics of American economy, in which to be rich people need to "own a product's name-brand name" (108). This connects to the larger issue of commodification of not only things but also people. The financescape through this logic of market economy reiterates the idea of commodification. While urging for consuming, the market economy, at the same time, turns people into commodities as they unconsciously follow the principle and the logic of free market capitalism.

The final stage in Boubacar's immigration experience is the resolution stage. According to Boelhower, the immigrants in the macrostructure of narrative experience reality and reach to the resolution stage, which can be characterized as assimilation, hyphenation, and alienation (5). The ideal reality that immigrants reach at the resolution stage leads the characters view the old view negatively. In this stage the immigrant subject reaches at a point in which he or she accepts the values of the new world, begins interacting with the community and makes significant decisions about his or her future career and life. Boubacar listens to Reverend Myles and church music on the radio and decides to go to the church in Clarksdale to play music with the band, "The Sons of Destiny." Boubacar internalizes an American lifestyle and learns to respect the differences. He admits that he "[is] from Africa," but "loves America" and participates Angus's pray with his "*Amen*" (298). On the other hand, the Wastrel represents Old World values and warns Boubacar to stick to his old values and ignore the New World values as they are *Kaffir* (293). In contrary to the constructed Old World views, Boubacar believes that there would be no harm being among the people in the church where he plays with the band and receives recognition from the congregation. The experience in the church is a significant point that contributes to spiritual adjustment of Boubacar to the host country, where he feels "he was somewhere he belonged" (329).

The cultural and spiritual adjustment of the immigrant protagonist is given through various scenes. The chapter "Ceremony for the Giving of a Name," in which people get together to name Lisa's baby reinforces the spiritual adjustment. Upon this the Wastrel gives Boubacar a sharp stare; however, Boubacar engages in playing music with the band and ignores the Wastrel and thus the old worldviews that the Wastrel symbolizes. He plays with the band; surprisingly the Wastrel participates with his Wolof drum as well. In the resolution stage, the characters reach either

spiritual or material adjustment. Boubacar has not reached material status that he dreamed yet. However, he is on the way to achieve his "the city on the hill," dream just by starting to play music with professional bands. His American dream is related to music. He wants to play music and make money. For that reason he frequently visits music studios, such as Tower Records, in Memphis. Tower Records is another symbol that the narrative uses to signify the American Dream or "the city on the hill," because the name of the company itself symbolizes American imperialism and capitalism as the tower buildings stand for the twin towers that were the finance and economy capital of the world. By referencing Tower Records, the text reminds the readers of its post- 9/11 context and connects the event to globalization. Rather than referencing "bare facts and figures, names and dates, the irreducible reality of what had happened," the texts fills a niche in literature by connecting the event to globalism and its effects on transnational citizens in this country.

In *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011), Richard Gray explains that "the destruction of the World Trade Center took place in front of what Habermas called 'a global public" (6). Since the collapse of the Towers was broadcasted alive, the whole world's population witnessed the event and this created a global public. It was not only the Trade Center that the attackers destroyed, but an icon in American imagery. Gray argues that "one vital consequence of this, for writers, was that the traumatic moment was also an iconic one" (7). The fall of the Twin Towers became a "powerful visual image for other kinds of fall" (7). *The Celestial Jukebox* portrays this global public when Dean turns on the radio and listens Hank Williams who sings about a wooden Indian, then he hears how Israeli bulldozers uprooted an olive tree in Jerusalem, and then listens to the chants of Monks from Himalayas. He finally hears "a plane hit the building in New York" (409). This radio program brings the global public and shows how the 9/11 is not

only America's icon but a global image the collapse of which brought hardships to a global public. Gray states that "in some texts, the towers, or the people, fall over and over again"; however, Shearer's text rebuilds the national icon through the Tower Records, which continues to be the hub of the music business and embraces the global public as a multicultural space (7).

Boubacar's spiritual adjustment reaches to resolution after hearing the news of 9/11. Upon the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, Boubacar decides to go to Memphis to see the immigration judge to help him. When Boubacar entered the Tower Records in Memphis after the 9/11, his eyes "raked the room. The living and dead were all [there], in this place that was like a jukebox of all spirits" (418). This syncretic hybridity aligns with Boubacar's becoming a hybrid character. From Dean's perspective, the text delineates music "like a seine net […] trawling the air to catch the spirits of the mutilated of the world, and romance them back into the arms of the rest, who could help them" (410). Shearer uses 9/11 to bring the global public together in her text, as Angus argues "*Ain't no such thing as original Americans. Original settlers*," which Dean supports by saying that "[his] *people were all thieves out of the jails of England*" (414). I argue that through these characters, the text challenges the antagonistic and separatist rhetoric of post 9/11 literature and brings the global public together to enliven the notion of multicultural nation. The casino business, which I will analyze deeply in the following section, allows the text to bring the "global public" together in Madagascar Mississippi and contributes to a global and multicultural U.S. South. In addition to Boubacar's story of assimilation and travel throughout the phases of traditional immigrant narratives, Shearer adds a new phase to the immigration narrative by placing the casino business in an old plantation.

Casino Business

Through the casino business, the text problematizes the haunting memory of slavery and labor exploitation. The roads of new immigrants and history of the region intersect in the casino. Thus, the Lucky Leaf Casino invokes the central themes in *The Celestial,* which evokes the uncanny structure of labor exploitation, reminds of labor traumas in the South. I argue that the casino in *The Celestial* problematizes southern history of labor exploitation and forced displacement. In other words, the casino allows the readers to make a connection with the haunting logic of slavery, codes of slavery, and forced displacement of Native Americans.

The casino business in Mississippi dates back to colonial times. In his book *People of Chance*[7] (1986), John M. Findlay explains why Mississippi in colonial times became such an attraction place for gambling. He notes that the Mississippi River and "the connected waterways were major avenues of trade for farmers and merchants and the river boats carried passengers who had a lot of cash"(4). These people with money slowly started the casino gaming. Findlay states that "taverns and roadhouses would allow dice and card games. The relatively sparse population was a barrier to establishing gaming houses" (51). However, the increase in the population led to the opening of "lavish casinos by the early 1800s." After the great depression, especially after the stock market crash of 1929, gambling became a legalized business action because legalized gambling, in the form of the casino business, was looked upon as a way to stimulate the economy.

[7] In *People of Chance*, Findlay takes a metaphorical approach and claims that the importance of the frontier to the culture of gaming has not received much attention form historians and aims to fill this chasm in the field. He argues that whenever the frontier was located, gambling held particular cultural importance. He argues that gambling and the forms of it has taken in America are keys to understanding the evaluation of American character. He further argues that since the earliest colonial days Americans have been westering frontier people and gambling has been endemic to their frontiers.

Edward J. Clynch et. al. state that casino gaming for cities such as Biloxi is "a way out of the financial morass in which they have been mired for a number of years" (80). They further state that today "twenty-nine Mississippi casinos employ around 30.000 people and generate $885 million annual payroll" (84). In this sense, *The Celestial Jukebox* addresses the historical and political characterization of the region while displaying the historical role of gambling and casinos and their economic and social impact in the U.S. South.

Through such references, the text can be read as an aspect of economic drive and labor economies, which are associated with labor and trauma in the region. To better portray the exploitative logic, Lucky Leaf casino is established in a former plantation in Madagascar. In this regard, Martyn Bone describes the casino as a "kind of neoplantation that employs African workers" ("Narratives" 71). What do these people do in this fictional Mississippi town of Madagascar? Shearer uses Madagascar as a setting place for the casino to accentuate the significance of place, since it is a place that is being "received and made and remade," to appropriate a phrase from David Harvey (*Spaces of Capital* 169). The casino industry is the embodiment of the notion of a place that is being "made and remade." As Richard Godden states "the earth itself is fact of labor, whose meaning is inseparable from the dominant forms of work in the South" (61). Through the casino business, the text negotiates the trauma history of African Americans, immigrants, and Native Americans.

After a section called "Introit," the narrative of immigration starts with Boubacar's arrival to Memphis airport. Boubacar travels from Mauritania to stay with his uncles who work in a casino in Madagascar, Mississippi. Boubacar's travel is the reenactment of the arrival of labor force from Africa to the U.S. South. The African migratory streams are linked by the legacies of colonial

history, and with Boubacar, Shearer mirrors historical labor traumas, such as slavery and Native American's displacement, which can be read as her critique of the exploitation of labor in global market economies. Boubacar's travel to Mississippi reminds the audience that "postmodern destinies are as old as ancient memory" (Muller 218), which brings a new level of transnationalism into the memory of the nation with a lot of hyphenated identities. To better depict the relationship between the U.S. South and African labor, an African American soldier helps Boubacar at the airport and gives him a ride to Madagascar Mississippi. The soldier has no name. Throughout the chapter Six Mabone, the narrator calls him as "the soldier" (Shearer 20). A nameless African American soldier helping an African boy to travel to Mississippi addressees the trauma of nameless slaves who were brought to work in the cotton fields and plantations, one of which is turned into a casino in *The Celestial Jukebox.* Through the soldier, the narrative also reminds the readers of the story of black soldiers who had no choice but to go to the war to feed their families, such as Aubrey's father, who I will discuss later. The trauma is displayed as the soldier speaks: "*It was some troubles here, long time ago*" (23). For that reason, the soldier addresses several points in the traumatic history of the region. The soldier talks about the labor exploitation and how slaves were forced to work in Mississippi.

The history of labor trauma haunts the memory of the soldier in the modern day. Shearer complicates the notion of slavery and emphasizes the fact that "slavery does not, nor can it, just go away" (Adams 8). The soldier and the stories he reminds the readers depict that slavery and exploitation of labor and people of color are embedded and became a feature of the region's culture. Through the soldier's memory, Shearer problematizes chain gang labor and addresses the haunting methods of modern day forced labor practices. Soldier explains:

> *Used to could see peoples hitchhiking, hooping freight trains, anything to get out of those cotton fields. Time to pick cotton, white man stop the black man on the road, minding his own bidness, put him in the police car, put him out to work on the country farm. Jailhouse first, then they decide the reason. Cotton all picked, you free to go on down the road.* (23, emphasis in the original)

In reminding us of chain gang and exploited laborers in the South, Shearer, as a social critic and commentator, attracts her readers' attention to the issue and enables the community to face historical facts. Through this confrontation, she complicates the modern day labor exploitation to which immigrants are exposed.

Playing the role of a psychologist, Shearer unveils the trauma in the collective conscious of oppressed people. The trauma, in the psychological context, is a "psychic injury caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed" (Olick 343). As Jeffrey Olick theorizes, once the "memory of […] personally traumatic experience is externalized and objectified as narrative means it is no longer a purely individual psychological matter" (345). The soldier's articulation of labor exploitation is the externalization of this trauma. This notion may explain galvanizing role of history long after its participants are gone. Collective memory, as in the haunting economy of slavery, becomes external narrative. Through the soldier's memory both history and collective memory are now publicly available social facts.

The social framework what shapes the soldier's memory transforms the experience and explains the perpetuation of exploitation. The main motive behind the employment of black workers as chain gang is the commercial reflexes of landowners. Since the "social history of the various manifestations of a ruling class dependent upon black workers" it is a commercial reflex of white oppressor to manipulate the laws and finds alternative ways to employ black manpower

in their business to create surplus (Godden 2). The soldier, as Tara McPherson puts it, represents "new ways of feeling southern that are more fully come to terms with the history of racial oppression and racial connection in the South" (McPherson 8). For that reason, as the soldier claims, most of the people left the region to go to "*Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Oakland… never to come back except may be for the Fourth of July* [and] *Decoration*" (23). This textual evidence explains why so many field hands left the region for better opportunities. It also explains how the economy is enlivened through fetishizing the region and bringing alternative markets, such as the casino business, to the region, which attracts unskilled cheap labor and compensates the lost economic capital.

The gambling interest of state elites will follow from their perception of their own balance of symbolic and economic capitals. Jeffry Sallaz argues that "[g]ambling policy creation is a capital conversion project, as state actors seek to balance economic and symbolic capitals and outside parties try to convert economic and organizational resources into the highly symbolic form of political capital' (294). Such conversation takes place in Lucky Leaf's political domain, which is a product of political history, slavery and displacement. The psychic traumas have profound implications at the personal and communal levels (qtd. in Richardson 336). The collective memory that the Lucky Leaf Casino symbolizes addresses blunt traumas of dislocation, torture, oppression, and exploitation.

In *Disturbing Calculations*, Melanie Benson Taylor explains that "delivered from slavery, Reconstruction, and segregation, the twentieth century South finds itself at least nominally integrated into an American capitalist economy of limitless opportunity, but increasingly attached to slavery's prescriptive calculations of worth, value, certainty, and hierarchy" (2). Data from U.S.

Department of Homeland Security Office of Immigration Statistics states that while illegal immigrants in Mississippi in 2000 were 8000, this number increased to 35.000 in 2010, an increase of 337.5%. Similarly, while the number of persons obtained legal permanent resident was 1074 in 2000, the number increased to 1652 in 2010 with an increase of 53.82 %. (web) Shearer's text portrays this increase and details how Mississippi becomes a new destination for immigrants as a corollary of the casino development that revived economy in the rural South. In this space, which is shaped by globalization and capitalism, Shearer complicates "slavery's prescriptive" methods and stratification. Devaluation of the human labor and focusing surplus leads to the perpetuation of plantation logic which substitutes immigrant labor with slavery. The only difference with the slavery is that the latter is given a salary as compensation and freedom to quit the job and free themselves from the exploitative logic of employers. In both cases, the workers form the backbone of the economy, which brings surplus and richness to the employer. The low-wage immigrant labor becomes the scaffold of the casino business and therefore the economy in Madagascar.

The immigrants from many parts of the world dominate the casino and food industry jobs once held by blacks and poor white workers. In that vein, Shearer reminds her readers of the work of "historiographic metafiction" to reveal the current human condition. Thus, she reinvents and retells the nation's story through Dean's perspective and observation of the conditions of the workers in the casino. Dean observes that "liveried valets from Africa and Arkansas loitered in purple coats with golden epaulets under a splendid fringed purple awning" (181). The human condition in the casino business is depicted through Mauritanian casino workers and their attachment to the casino. The valets from Africa are the altered form of human commodification and labor exploitation. The Western flavor of a uniform of epaulets and the association of Western

values with the color purple which represents royalty, high ranking positions of authority, wealth and fame, and bravery and honor as in the U.S. military (Purple Heart), challenges the dominant power and its romanticization. In addition to the symbolic significance of the color purple, the Eurocentric superiority is reinforced with the epaulets, which signifies the rank. In other words, the casino owners reinforce their position as modern-day slave owners through these signifiers. Popular culture reflects that the investment in plantation ideology is indeed a national phenomenon. Its commercial appeal is certainly clear in the Lucky Leaf Casino. The sense of "neoplantation" is repeated through these images and the text embodies the fact that the strange and contradictory possibilities that slavery released into the realm of the normal still "shape social spaces, including the reimagined plantation" (Adams 4-5).

Upon Boubacar's arrival at the Memphis airport, the narrative voice explains why there is no one to meet him at the airport. Boubacar's uncles cannot leave work to meet him at the airport because of the fear that they may lose their job in the casino if they take a day-off. The fear of punishment (i.e. the loss of a job) makes the immigrant labor in the casino more profitable for the employers not because they are more efficient than black or white American labor but because their labor costs less. According to Karl Marx, capitalism has the ability to enslave, while consumer culture has the capacity to commodity everything (Adams 8). Through Boubacar's uncles, Shearer both exemplifies this argument and problematizes the perpetuation of "quantification and commodification" of the labor force in the South (M.B.Taylor 2).

Since "everything is commodifiable" at some level in this system, the commodification of human labor is the result of increasingly globalized capitalist system (Rieff 72). The commodification is portrayed when a "man takes a day off to take his wife to the hospital to give

a birth. When he leaves for hospital, he is replaced by the very same day by another immigrant from Mauritania" (17). This pressure of losing one's job epitomizes that the immigrant workers in the casino are not free agents as they are not free to sell their labor buy they are *forced* to sell their labor. For that reason, the transaction depicts that "slavery is not simply an antebellum institution that the United States has surpassed but a particular historical form of an ongoing crisis involving the subjection of personhood to property" (Best 16). The transaction between the casino employers and the employee is a voluntary contract with capital as the immigrants have limited choices.

In relation to the commodities and commodification of human labor, social theorist Karl Polanyi in his book *The Great Transformation* (2001) explains that with the advent of modern capitalism, the three key concepts of "land, money, and labor" become "fictitious commodities" since we can price, sell and buy them (29). There are ways in which the text and Lucky Leaf embed those fictitious commodities by buying and selling them starting with Boubacar's purchase. In this vein, *The Celestial Jukebox* revisits the concepts of human property in its descriptions of workers in the Lucky Leaf, which represents the dynamic, efficient and veritable model of managerial modernity, which takes place of the old plantation economy. In other words, the casino symbolizes the transformation of the highly capitalistic form of agriculture in the antebellum South, under the form of slavery and plantation economies, into modern day capitalistic form of labor exploitation. The success of the casino is dependent on the devoted, hardworking, responsible, and obedient workers that would increase the wealth of the casino owner. The perception of the casino among the members of the community supports this criticism, for example, as Angus thought suddenly of the casino, as "a fat, money-sucking larval colony on the landscape across the field" (Shearer 129). While this description of the casino is social criticism of the exploitative capitalist economy, it

also historically addresses the blood-sucking plantation economy as it was realized in the past. Angus's perception negotiates the paradigm shift in economic space and immigration.

Analyzed from capitalist and free market economy, the casino maintains the logic of plantation economy as "the plantation was categorically a business enterprise, organized and geared for revenue and participation in both local and national economies" (M.B. Taylor 7). On the surface and deeper level of the Luck Leaf Casino that is established in an old plantation underscores the idea of business enterprise as it creates revenue for the local and global economies through immigrant labor and abusing the customers. The main drive behind this business enterprise is to make a profit. From the employers' perspective, the casino business contributes to the local government by creating value added tax. However, the description of the interior of the casino from Dean's perspective as a place with "the noise first, hypnotic drone, an electronic beckoning like thousands of dreamy false coins falling, a way of wooing fools" strikingly emphasizes how consumerist market economy exploits people's desires to win (182). It implies that the customers in the casino are in a hypnotic trance and controlled by the noise just as the galley slaves that were instructed to move according to the rhythms of the drums.

It is striking that the casino management uses the same techniques to seduce the customers that plantation owners used to control the slaves and get the utmost outcome from their labor. As slave narratives, such as Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), and Harriet Ann Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861), inform the readers that the slaves during antebellum period were allowed to drink on holidays in order to ward off their contemplating on slavery and the dehumanizing attitudes of slave owners towards them. The slaves were controlled by letting them drink and play music. In

this sense, *The Celestial Jukebox* does not only problematize the immortalization of exploitation but also complicate the fact that the oppressors use the same methods. Aubrey is intoxicated and Peregrine is asked to serve him more drinks so that they can have him sign some papers (384). In *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (2004) Stephen M. Best observes that "slavery is not simply an antebellum institution that the United States has surpassed but a particular historical form of an ongoing crisis involving the subjection of personhood to property (16). The readers see how the new world of market capitalism relies on an often-uncanny repetition of plantation principles.

There are ways in which Lucky Leaf is represented as a place that exploits not only the workers but also the gamblers. This double-edged situation reminds the readers of the slavery, which dehumanizes not only the slaves but the hegemonic power as well that strips itself from humanity. Shearer revisits the concepts of human property with the descriptions of the murals on the walls, which recalls optical illusions to deceive people while romanticizing the myth of the plantation. Jessica Adams argues that "careful readings of plantation images suggest that slavery's physical and psychic violence is always active within scenes of nostalgia" (17). Similarly, In *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and Postmodern Perspective* (1998), Antonio Benitez-Rojo defines plantation as a machine, which facilitates the destructive work of colonialism from its "mercantilist laboratory" (5).

Similar to the plantation economy, the casino business, as a proliferating and insatiable machine, mirrors the economic and spiritual destruction through capitalist lenses. Moreover, "the plantation machine" is highly adaptable to the changing economic and social circumstances and attempts "systematically to shape, to suit to its own convenience" (Benitez-Rojo 27). Thus, the

plantation machine metamorphoses into the casino machine in the Lucky Leaf, which is a symbolic representation of capitalist nostalgia. The nostalgia that the Lucky Leaf represents emerges as problematic for modern habitants of the South in that it represents the persistence of the catastrophic capitalist machine. The vivid depiction of the plantation and the overseers in a mural on the wall of the casino functions as a historical document that portrays how the exploitative mode of the plantation is romanticized and perpetuated in the South. The Lucky Leaf is a place where New Southerners and many tourists all around the country and the world find themselves "haunted by slavery's methods that both tantalized and curtailed by capitalism's uncannily analogous promises and priorities" (M.B.Taylor 2).

The casino is the embodiment of the free market capitalism, industrialization, globalization and economic expansion that treats labor as mechanized objects. From this point of view, the references to the exploitative logic of plantation and its perpetuation through the modern day casino business are not limited to the murals on the walls. The output of the plantation machine is not limited to agricultural products; "it also manufactures political structures, violent conflict, and repression" (Russ 98). When Dean enters the casino to look for Aubrey and save him from the blood sucking economy of the casino, the narrator describes the manager of the casino as "a white man" with a chest of "massive expanse elegant pinstripes," who holds Dean's hand and was ready to increase the pressure that he is applying to his hand (Shearer 184).

The manager's behavior reinforces the plantation's power and portrays the side of capitalism that "has the ability to enslave consumer culture and has the capacity to commodify everything" it encounters (Adams 8). Dean trips some kind of invisible wire of alarm in the place. The management sees him as a threat to their business as Dean wants to warn Aubrey and take

him out of the casino. Dean acts like a liberator who wants to unshackle the invisible chains of exploitative logic of capitalist investment. His description of the bodyguards associates the plantation management with the casino management as they behave like overseers. When Dean wants to take Aubrey out of the casino, the bodyguards surround him and give him the sense of "muscled overseers standing on what one had been all cotton fields" (185). By trying to save Aubrey from the cogs of the plantation machine, Dean assigns himself a role of abolitionist who tries to save slaves from the dehumanizing conditions in which they live and work.

Just as the abolitionists fought for the freedom of the slaves, Dean fights for the freedom of Aubrey and tries to save not only his pride and soul but also his fortune and future. However, Dean's existence in the casino as is not welcomed and they ask him to leave. The logic of commodification that started with Boubacar's purchase repeats when the casino manager "pulled something out of his pocket…. [a] pseudo-money, something resembling old plantation scrip" (185). The old plantation scrip is the proof of commodification as people are bought and sold through the scrip. The pseudo-money, as a form of scrip, functions as a modern day document that enslaves the gamblers in the casino. As Adams puts it "new technologies and the rise of new economic forces and cultural forms caused [the plantation] to evolve in terms of what it could do and what it meant" (5). The scrip evolved into a form of pseudo money that maintains the exploitative logic of the plantation economy. It epitomizes destruction to humanity and exploitation of human labor, which caused a variety of oppositional resistance movements.

The casino employs unskilled and cheap immigrant labor and exploits them as they do not belong to any labor union. As in the case of Boubacar's uncles, the workers do not have any mobility and flexibility at the workplace that would enable them perform their daily chores. The

oppressive power of the modern day overseers controls every movement of the workers in the casino. This surveillance strips their human feelings and the workers turn into robots that obey the orders, which generally involve either seducing or intoxication of the customers. There are ways in which the casino business attracts and figuratively enslaves its customers. Modern consumerist and marketing strategies use sexual codes and images to create consumer desire. According to Darren W. Dahl et al. sexual economies theory "marries the of gender in sexual attitudes with social exchange theory, which conceptualizes interpersonal interactions as two or more parties that each give up something with the aim of getting back something of greater value" (217). There are ways in which *The Celestial Jukebox* portrays this interaction. For example, the relation between sexual economic theory and casino business is portrayed through the billboard on the highway that advertises the casino. On the board, a waitress with sexually attractive costumes, says, "SPEND THE NIGHT WITH ME" (139, emphasis in the original).

In addition, the casino business in the text is associated with the alluring and hypnotic effect of sexuality to seduce the customers ties the casino business to plantation economies. The visual imagery of sexuality starts with the billboard and continues when Dean enters the casino for the first time and ends with the fountain in front of the casino. Dean enters the casino to take Aubrey out of the cogs of the machine; he encounters with waitresses that wear the same costume seen on the billboard that is the reminiscent of the French boudoir maids. The waitresses serve alcohol to the customers to "get [them] in there drunken enough to lose everything" they have (187). Dean acknowledges these ways and tells Peregrine that "there's more'n one way to be a slave to white men" (187). These ways utilize sex and liquor to enslave people. Dean believes that the Lucky Leaf Casino "seemed like some vaguely pornographic piece of cardboard left behind on the

horizon to fool tasteless Americans who could not afford the real Europe" (181, emphasis in the original).

The use of sexual economies theory offers insight into the ongoing operation of the casino industry. Through sexual imagery, casino business transforms symbolic capital into economic capital. *The Celestial Jukebox* conceptualizes modern space as a "political field which improves upon theories of the state implicit in both economic sociology and Marxist accounts" (Sallaz 269). In this sense, the inside of the casino with its sexual elements ("the lights were dim in some places, bright in others"), which Dean states is "more pornographic" than the billboard, portrays the convertibility of space economies. The casino is physically designed to appropriate and control both the workers and gamblers at the same time. In this sense, it is reminiscent of a cavern with "a big bunker with no windows" (182). This structure would terminate the relationship with the outer world, so the people inside "will lose track of time" (182). Losing a sense of time turns them into zombies that the casino owners can easily direct, control, and abuse. In other words, it can use them as commodities and as vehicles to make more money.

In addition to the economic exploitation that the casino brings to the workers, the most severe impact is experienced by the customers. The gamblers are totally economically exploited when they lose what Dean calls "legalized theft" (183). The relationship between casino owners and gamblers in the casinos can be explained with the help of social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory, social behavior is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of this process is to maximize the benefit, while minimizing the cost. However, there is an imbalanced

relation of power.[8] The casino owners utilize several marketing strategies to seduce and entice their potential customers. Music and, more importantly, sexual attraction are among these strategies which are highly applied by the casino management in *The Celestial Jukebox*. The economic exchange and imbalance of power is depicted through Aubrey and his grandson. The destruction that the casino brings is the re-envisioning of the systematic economic exploitation of the plantation. It is significant that it is Aubrey, an African American, who "got himself in a situation" and was destroyed by the gambling industry (179). The casino confiscates Aubrey's property and "takes his best tractor," without which he would not be able to produce any crops to pay back the bank loans (179).

Aubrey's economically exploitation in the casino is a reminiscent of the historical connections and trauma of the people of color in the U.S. South. When Aubrey's father "*gave his life for America*" in the War, Dean helps him, gives him job and "over a half acre land to grow vegetables for his family" (197). Dean takes him to celestial grocery and offers him coffee to introduce him to the customers of the grocery and to give the message that Aubrey is under the protection and guidance of Dean. It was in 1974 when people in this section of the country were not used to see a black boy sitting and drinking coffee with them. Dean's actions ends the segregation in social space as well because that year in Mississippi black and white children started to go to the same school. Aubrey worked in the farm for years. Then came a time when the sons

[8] In his 1958 work *Social Behavior as Exchange* sociologist George Homans defined social exchange as the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons. Following Homans, Peter M. Blau and Richard M. Emerson as major developers of exchange perspective improved the theory. For more information, see Karen S. Cook and Erick R. W.Rice. *Handbook of Sociological Theory,* edited by Jonathan H. Turner. kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers, New York.

of most white families left for desk jobs in Memphis. Aubrey becomes a successful farmer and amasses his possessions. Aubrey continued working on his land and he "started his own crop-dusting company. He had a fleet of tractors, combines, and cotton-pickers. He was a man of means, meaning he lay down every night owing over a million dollars" (198).

After his wife's death, Aubrey starts going to the casino. Strikingly, Aubrey's case reminds the reversal of Frederic Douglass's chiasmus, which is anachronistic in *The Celestial Jukebox*: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man" (107). Madagascar has seen a how a black child was made into a man with million dollars of fortune through perseverance and hard work, and the same Madagascar now witnesses how that black man is turned to a slave because of his passion for gambling. The casino plays the role of plantation economy and destroys an African farmer, just like the plantation destroyed the lives of Aubrey's ancestors. Aubrey becomes a regular customer of the casino and increases the amount of the game as he loses. Finally, he uses his tractor as a collateral and gets credit from the bank to continue gambling.

The casino business and the transformation of an old plantation in a casino portrays how the South has transformed from a cotton and tobacco producing, "backward" place to a modern site of consumption. The consumerist mechanism of market economy changed the fertile cotton land into a commodity that covered all that land into asphalt today. In *Financial Derivatives and the Globalization of Risk* (2004), Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee explain that "the fulcrum of power and profit begins to shift from the production of commodities to the circulation and capital" (qtd. in Godden 415). Thus, it is not only the casino but also the landscape with shopping malls that depicts the transformation of producing, working hands into losing hands. Dean observes how

the casino industry turns people into zombies who unconsciously feed the slot machines. Among the customers, Dean witnesses black sharecroppers, an elderly man who is attached to a portable oxygen tank on wheels, and even *Mennonites* at the casino, which leads him to think that "this is the end" (183). This customer demographic communicates the larger issue of plantation logic in the casino: as Dean explains, "there were thousands of people were here… no man is free" (185). This reminds the reader of the antebellum master slave relationship, which was a physically coercive labor system. The slaves who produced the cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice, and other crops that enriched the antebellum planter class worked for their owners and worked hard because of their unfree status left them few other choices. Similarly, the customers, immigrant workers, and addicted gamblers became commodity to produce surplus for the casino owners. The destructive effect is not limited to the workers and the gamblers; the owners themselves became a commodity as well for their voracious appetite to make more money. The owners, in this sense, become the slaves of their eagerness and enslave themselves. As Dean said with a shaking rage, "nobody is free in the casino, not even the owners" (185). With the Mennonites, the destructive aspect of the casino is carried from economical level to spiritual level, as Mennonites are known for their emphasis on issues such as peace, justice, simplicity, community, service, and mutual aid.

The distinction between a tourist gaze and the reality of lived lives in Madagascar is vital to *The Celestial Jukebox, as* when the narrator describes the fountain through Dean's gaze. When Dean comes out of the casino, he notices the sparkling fountain and depicts it in the following manner: "concrete cherubs cavorted, while concrete angles with the bodies of whores watched over them. Then he saw the cotton-pickers and combines, arranged in a circle around the fountain. Each one had a *For Sale* sign on it (186, emphasis in the original). The meaning attached to the

figures are "embedded in an environment actively molded and achieved" through the text. Which brings up the notion of commodification. The figure depicts the deep continuity of relationship labor between the land and labor exploitation. Through cotton-pickers and a *For Sale* sign, the text brings historical traumas and labor economies into the light and challenges the human commodification. However, for Peregrine Smith-Jones "there is a kind of justice" through the casinos commodification of people. Peregrine believes that those who abuses people, abuses himself/herself as well as they strip off their humanity. This justice can act itself in several different ways. She states that "*the big daddies could finally lose their plantations*" (186). The text problematizes the romanticization of the Old South. The plantation owner "Big Daddy" thus loses control over everything around him.

The Celestial Jukebox problematizes how the region remains "at once the side of trauma of slavery and also the mythic location of a vast nostalgia" (McPherson 6). With the casino business, the text conceptualizes the postmodern condition of labor. Through a plethora of ethnic and racial identities, the text excels at observing the ways in which the South is imbricated in a network of globalism that ties its residents together. With Boubacar's story, *The Celestial Jukebox* invites its readers to become a part of this Global South and reinvent and revive the nation's story of "the city in the hill." By merging African American, Native American, African, Honduran and Chinese cultures with their colliding myths and histories interactively in the fictitious space of Madagascar, the text portrays how the South became a hybrid space. In other words, the text inscribes a new nation that shatters the biracial and bicultural landscape of the U.S. South attributing to the region a more global and more comprising role in the twenty-first century. By challenging plantation nostalgia, human commodification, and exploitation, the text contributes to

the subversion of economic and historical abuses of the immigrants and labor in the contemporary U.S. South.

Chapter 4

Mississippi Masala: Postcolonial Labor Trauma and Labor of Color in the South

This chapter shifts the study's focus from fiction to cultural production to demonstrate how cultural productions portray global changes, including those of immigration and alterations in the relationships between the U.S. South and the Global South. The chapter also extends existing representations of the U.S. South by analyzing Mira Nair's 1991 film *Mississippi Masala*. The film offers a new perspective onto labor and racial relations in the U.S. South by displaying global connections. While contributing to the ongoing scholarly debates on regionalism and promoting the concept of the Global South, the chapter aims to analyze how Nair constructs regional imagery through labor, music and displacement. In other words, the critical analysis of *Mississippi Masala* that I present here aims to highlight what Scot Romine calls "constructing and negotiating a regional imaginary" (2).

Economic and political means comprise the ideology, which dominates labor and race relations in the region. I argue that Nair creates a reality in the film and portrays that people are, as Marx said, dominated by ideas that bear no accurate relation to the reality they live. In *Mississippi Masala*, Nair provides a horrific visual representation of economic and military enclosures that prompt the migration of the Loha family from Uganda. She problematizes the dominant power that profits from the status quo and portrays how that power intervenes in economic and political issues. Nair poignantly explores the references of economic and racial relations in specific ways that operate in the film to re-envision and reshape perceptions of labor and globalization in the U.S. South. While re-envisioning the South, Nair shows that post-southern thinking and representation can be associated with the traditional southern trope of labor.

I analyze the film *Mississippi Masala* through the lenses of "labor trauma," and conflict theory, as delineated by Tim Delaney, and Brain McFarlane's film-viewing strategies. The audience, as McFarlane writes, "expects a sense of the minutiae of a world that is going on beyond the page or the screen's frame" (21). McFarlane continues by explaining that the imagination of the viewer is kept active in creating this world, "whether by a conceptualizing based on the words given on the page or … on the diverse perceptual information taken in while watching the screen and listening to the soundtrack" (McFarlane 28). It is clear that in responding to the stimuli offered by a film, this chapter takes extra cinematic codes into account while analyzing *Mississippi Masala*. According to McFarlane, there are four cinematic codes: linguistic codes (the accents, tones, class ethnicity and temperament), nonlinguistic codes (musical and other sound effects), visual codes and cultural codes (29). Through utilizing these codes, I aim to discover global connections, the haunting methods of labor exploitation and the perpetuation of hegemony in the contemporary American South.

The noun "Masala" in the title of the film refers to uncanny hybridity and the multicultural South where different ethnicities, diverse cultures and languages come together to transcend racial and cultural boundaries. Mina, the female Indian protagonist of the film, explains in one of the scenes that "Masala" a mixture of hot spices. Nair uses this concept of mixture in order to evoke the uncanny structure of the labor economies and its global connections through the haunting memory of slavery and colonialism. Nair puts an Indian motel business in the context of the South's labor history to depict a new image of the region. Mina and her family, contrary to their upper-middle-class lifestyle in Uganda, are forced to live and work in a motel, The Monte Cristo, in Greenwood, Mississippi. The motel in *Mississippi Masala* is a significant motif, which

"symbolizes the temporary and transitional, emphasizing the binary structure of rootedness/ rootlessness that operates throughout the film" (Mehta 221). The motel creates a cultural and communal space for the Indian community to perform their cultural and religious ceremonies without outside interference. It enables the Indian community to preserve their history, tradition, and religion; at the same time they maintain their separateness from the rest of the community in Greenwood. This separateness creates a functional space for the "Masala," mixture of spices. In doing so, Nair suggests that this kind of community life is a characteristic of all immigrant communities as it creates a space, an enclave, for empowerment. Nair insinuates that so long as they are united and stick to their traditions and cultures, the motel empowers them.

The acknowledgement of the relationship between immigrant labor and space becomes an important tool for understanding the changing dynamics in modern post-southern space. In *The Mobility*, Sassen stresses the importance of understanding immigration beyond the domestic policies and internal effects of the movements of diasporic peoples. She argues that "the massive increase in immigration to the U.S. can only be accurately studied if connections… between sending countries and U.S. foreign policy are fully understood" (6). Sassen's theory of globalization enables the paper to describe the ways in which the Indian families have been separated from their adopted lands and properties in Uganda and forced to migrate to the South that depends on cheap labor. The Indian existence in Uganda was always considered as a problem. According to Hasu H. Patel, Obote, who Idi Amin overthrew, "had continually reminded the U.K. that Uganda would not agree to act as a refugee camp for British Indians and would accept them only so long as they could be useful to Uganda" (Patel 12). Patel further notices that there was "false, malicious, and inflammatory and racial propaganda leveled against the Asians in the news

media" (12). Idi Amin maintained this antagonism against Indians and in August 1972, Amin announced the mass expulsion of Asians over a period of three months. In fact, the signals of this removal were first given in 1971 when all Indians "were required to be present for Indian Census or forfeit their claim to living in Uganda" (Patel 12). This census enabled Ugandan authorities to control the displacement and follow whether everyone in the list left the country. *Mississippi Masala* provides us with some of the most coherent constructions of continuity of capitalism through its restructuring itself and utopian announcement of new benevolent world orders and irresistible globalization. In this utopian new world order, everybody has a right to pursue economic, political, and social wealth.

Migration is a continuous process in the era of globalization. People no longer just move from economic and geopolitical margins into what is considered a well-developed center, but essentially create multiple centers wherever they settle down and begin to earn a livelihood. Nair's film situates the U.S. South as a space with opportunities for a better future for the Indians displaced from Uganda. In other words, her cinematic technique, similar to the immigrant narratives explored in other chapters, brings marginalized groups into contact with American culture "in such a way that specific features of these groups become a distinct feature of postmodern life" (Muller 18). The Asian Indians were marginalized in Uganda and expelled from the country where they lived for generations. In Greenwood, Mississippi, they are treated as "the other"; however, their historical connections with the black continent of Africa and their present situation in Greenwood place them in a distinct position.

Moving the immigrant labor force from Uganda to the U.S. South, Nair shifts the labor force from the periphery to the core of capitalist investment. From this standpoint, *Mississippi*

Masala can be analyzed in two sections. The first part of the film is about Uganda and the Indian removal from Uganda, while the second part is about labor and racial conflict in Greenwood, Mississippi. Nair intelligently chooses Greenwood as the setting due to several roles that the town played in its history. One of the historical referents is Mississippi's historical role in slavery. Mississippi is associated with slavery and human exploitation in the past and perpetuating the human exploitation at present due to cheap labor opportunities in newly emerging economic spaces. Greenwood symbolizes a space where various races and cultures meet to make the region a microcosm of the globe. Prior to the Civil War, its levees were built and swamps were drained; therefore, planters discovered the rich dirt of Delta which was perfect for producing high-quality cotton. During its booming years, Greenwood was a "cotton capital of the world" (Whitehead 105). In addition to its history of plantation economy and slavery, Greenwood also reminds the viewers of the Native Americans, as the name of the town "honored Choctaw chief Greenwood Leflore" (Whitehead 7). Finally, Greenwood was a site for major protest and conflicts over racial rights during the civil rights movement. In terms of cultural portrayal, Nair uses Greenwood as it is a significant city in the history of the Blues. In *Blues Travelling: The Holly Sites of Delta Blue,* Steve Cheseborough notes that Greenwood is a Blues place which "hosts soul-blues concerts, including a Cotton Capitol Blues Festival" (131). Nair elaborately connects these historical moments throughout and in the final scene of the film. For Nair, Mississippi is a perfect place to portray the uncanny hybridity[9] of cultures, which creates a multicultural space. In addition to multiculturalism,

[9] During the past century, for a variety of reasons such as 1965 Immigration acts, political turmoil and wars, more people have been crossing national and cultural borders than ever before. This has seen to it that clear-cut distinctions, divisions and borders are no longer as easily definable as they once were. This process, now commonly referred to as 'globalization,' has led to a rising trend of 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural hybridity,' terms often connected with celebratory views of our postmodern, postcolonial world as a colorful melting pot of cultures.

Mississippi's history is full of stories of displacement and labor exploitation such as the removal of Native Americans and dehumanization and exploitation of the slaves. Nair uses the historical context of the region where the history of slavery "started under the Natchez civilization" when the French arrived with their African slaves and "introduced their own form of slavery" (Libby xii). In his book *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835* (2004), David J. Libby explains the rich history and its relation to slavery in the South. Libby states that Africans, American Indians, and Europeans had different cultures and slavery at that time.

These groups used their own understanding to negotiate the new world. Libby points out that the expansion of slavery began in this context of negotiation (xiii). He states that "as it evolved, slavery in Mississippi was a part of an economic system related to European colonization that created a transatlantic marketplace" (xiii). Within this context, *Mississippi Masala* renegotiates and re-envisions the labor history of double displacement by locating Uganda and Greenwood in the cognitive mapping of labor travel. The Indians displaced from Uganda are Indians by tradition and culture and Ugandan by birth. For that reason, their displacement is a double displacement.

The first part of *Mississippi Masala* begins in Kampala, Uganda, which is associated with labor exploitation and colonialism, and depicts labor travel through the globe from periphery to the core: a historical context of labor movement from Africa to the U.S. South. In this regard, the film connects British colonialism and labor exploitation and brings it to the attention of the modern audience. In other words, it addresses the broader historical realities of labor exploitation. Mina Nair states that "the film explores the notion of home for both African Americans who have a

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See for example, Homi Bhabha's *Commitment* in which he defines hybridity as "neither the One […] nor the Other […] but something else besides" (41).

mythic notion of Africa as home, and for the Indians who lived in Africa… and felt Indian even though they had never lived there" (Orenstein 61). Nair revisits colonial history and in a documentary form acquaints the audience with the history of double displacement and with the fact that the Indians were brought to Uganda by British colonizers to build the railways. When Demetrius, the African American protagonist invites Mina for dinner with his family, he makes the following introduction to his family: "This is Mina. She's from England, India, Africa-anywhere else?" Demetrius's father asks Mina, "How come they got Indians in Africa?" This conversation leads to this exchange:

> Mina: "The British brought them there to build the railways."
> Father: "Like slaves?"
> Mina: "Yes, that's how my grandfather came ..."

The attempt to establish historical links between enslavement and indentured labor, despite the different consequences of these forms of domination, could be seen as an overly simplistic way by which to move from historical particularities to cultural commonalities. Through this dialogue, however, Nair explores types of intersectionality between slavery and indentured workers, and the African American community and Indians in Greenwood without making any equivalence between them.

The displacement of Indians from Uganda can be explained through conflict theory. In the radical tradition of Marxism, ideology is a historical and political practice: ideology mystifies the dominant labor relations and consequently, the exploitation of the workers through the extraction of surplus labor. Karl Marx claimed that economics have a great impact on human decisions. Conflict Theory, whose basic tenet is the possession of power, emphasizes the role of power and the inequality found systematically throughout society. Marx believed that those who control the

means of production have the power. As a corollary, those with power use it to their advantage. Conflict theorists argue that, as Tim Delaney explains, "society's norms and values are those of the dominant group and that the privileged group imposes its will on subordinate groups in order to maintain its power position" (70). On Conflict theory, Delaney writes:

> Conflict theorists assume that social life revolves around the economic interests of the wealthy and that these people use their economic power to coerce and manipulate others to accept their view of the society- and the world. Because here is a clear power differential among individuals and social classes, resentment and hostility are constant elements of society. The obvious implication of this social reality is that conflict is inevitable. (70)

From this perspective, Conflict Theory highlights the critical analysis of power, coercion, social structures, and division of labor that are shaped by economic forces. In other words, Conflict Theory suggests that power is the core of all social relations as the dominant group gains control and stability through legal and economic power. There are two significant events related to labor and market economy in *Mississippi Masala* that we can analyze through the lens of Conflict Theory. The first is the expulsion of the Indians from Uganda by Idi Amin. The other is racial border crossings among Indian and African American communities in Greenwood that lead to conflicts of interests in economic space. In the latter, whites, as the dominant power in Greenwood, "use their economic power to coerce and manipulate" the job opportunities and possibilities for the people of color (Delaney 70).

Marx argued that the imbalance of power is the seed of conflict in any society, and is certainly true for conflicts both in Uganda and Greenwood. The first conflict is in Uganda where Asians had economic power and controlled the economy. The logic that Indians controlled and manipulated the economy in Uganda leads to the displacement of Indians from Uganda in 1972 after Idi Amin takes over the country. In this respect, Nair maps colonial history by telling the

story of Indians forced out of Africa through blurring the borders of fiction and documentary. Nair points out that behind this expulsion lies economic interests rather than racial or class issues. On August 4, 1972, President Amin, in his speech which covered a wide range of topics, announced that "Uganda had no place for the over 80,000 Asians holding British passports who are sabotaging Uganda's economy and encouraging corruption" (Patel 17). This is documented in the film and Amin's original speech is given as a flashback scene.

There are ways in which the opening scene and the historical background provided during the following scenes connect labor, colonialism, economy and displacement. The historical and social context of the Ugandan Indian family is set up in the first frame of *Mississippi Masala* and continues by means of flashbacks throughout the film, which enables the audience to see the film, as Zavarzadeh suggests in *Seeing Films Politically* (1991), in close relation with class and historical situatedness. Beginning and ending in Uganda, the film opens with an attempt to enunciate the rationale for Amin's expulsion of Indians. The opening scene is deeply powerful, precisely because it echoes a profound and common experience of the economic and cultural logic of late capitalism in labor force and its global connections. In other words, *Mississippi Masala* carefully and successfully communicates the deep-seated exploitation of labor and connection to the land, which reveals the capitalist and exploitative aspect of hegemony. By situating newly displaced immigrants from Africa to Greenwood, Nair reminds viewers of the arrival of slaves from Africa. The slaves were exploited, stripped of their humanity, and forced to work in the fields to create more surplus for their white owners. By bringing displaced Indians from Africa to Greenwood, Nair also reminds viewers of the historical trauma of the region in addition to portraying the transformation on exploitative institutions taking new forms.

The Indians who were brought to Uganda to build the railroads by the colonial British government lived in Uganda for generations and participated in business and trade; as a result, most Indians became rich and took the “lion’s share” from Uganda’s economy. Jay Loha’s, Mina’s father and a barrister who has a reputation for defending progressive black dissidents in the law courts in Uganda, portrays the economic strive behind the expulsion when he states that “most people are born with five senses. We are left only one. A sense of property.” This confession summarizes the economic conflict in Uganda, which leads to expulsion. The sense to have the property and possess power through material richness encourages people to exploit anything that would encounter so that they can achieve their goals. In other words, material richness gives power and authority over those who do not have that. Amin voices this fact politically and problematizes the existence of Indian work force in the country. His resentment is apparent in his televised speech to his people: “Asians have liked the cow but not fed it. Africans are poor. Asians are rich. The Asians are sabotaging the economy of Uganda.” There was much talk of a "war of economic liberation," of getting rid of the Indian exploiters and cheaters who had monopolized many sectors of the Ugandan economy and who had posed an obstacle to black Ugandan advancement (Patel 12).

An early scene in which the stability of the house of the Loha family, which overlooks Lake Victoria, and the fertile land of Uganda is disturbed by the sounds of gunshots and trucks. The conflict existed in Uganda denounced by Amin in his speech through mass media, and it is riveted by Jay’s African friend Okelo when he states that “Africa is for Africans. Black Africans.” The radio announcement at the very beginning of the film displays the fact that Africa is for Black Africans stating that the main drive behind the expulsion of Indians is to enable the indigenous

people to take control of the economy. In a later scene, Nair explores this reality. By documenting Amin's speech, she explains the reason behind the expulsion, which is the result of economic conflict in the country. As conflict theory puts forward, the conflict in the country led to an action that displaced Asians and enabled the Ugandans to take control of the economy.

Amin's political speech encourages and convinces people why it is necessary to expulse Asian Indians from Uganda. Amin wants to possess the economic power that Indians use to dominate the country. There are ways in which Nair challenges racist and political narrative forms, which are related to labor and economy. When Amin forces the Indians to leave the country, Jay resists the idea and says that Uganda is his home. However, Okelo's reaction, "Africa is for Africans. Black Africans," reflects racial and economic concerns behind the expulsion. Okelo's sentence has two implications. The first is that there is no hybrid identity in Uganda, which means Jay cannot define himself as Ugandan. The second is related to economic reasons, which implies that Black Africans should consume the natural sources of the country and take advantage of its rich lands and economy. This racial rhetoric is reiterated several times during the film. Another moment in which racial narrative is repeated in Greenwood is when Jay's Indian friend, Pontiac, accuses Jay of supporting the blacks. Pontiac states "In Uganda, [Jay] was the champion defender of blacks, but the same blacks kicked him out." The racial rhetoric, accompanied with the conflict between Indian and African American communities, functions as catalysis to equate economic and racial concerns to the cause of the problem.

The racial rhetoric supported by economic and political reasons is highly picturesque and lucid throughout the film. The film begins in Uganda in 1972 at nighttime when two cars are driving on an old road. The car in the front is stopped by armed soldiers for inspection. There are

two men in the car; Jay and his childhood African friend Okelo. The police control and the tense moment it causes is reflected in the friends' faces. The soldiers inspect the people in the car through a torchlight and after a tense moment they let them go. Then, viewers listen to the radio news which says that it is the day of November 7th, 1972, in which the "people of Uganda are witnessing the end of one chapter in [Uganda's] history and the beginning of another." November 7th is the last day for the Asians to leave the country, which causes social and political changes in the community. According to the radio announcement, their removal will "pave the way for the indigenous people of Uganda to control the economy." Viewers later learn that Jay had been jailed for denouncing Idi Amin as an evil man during a BBC interview, and Okelo had bribed the police to obtain Jay's release. Following Idi Amin's edict to expel all "Asians" from the country, Jay Loha has to leave his country with his wife, Kinnu, and their five-year-old daughter, Mina. He also has to leave his best friend, Okelo, a "Black African." The family ends up in Greenwood, Mississippi where Nair extrapolates on the perpetuation of labor and economic relations based on racial stereotyping.

The second conflict is portrayed through cultural codes when Mina and Demetrius are found in a hotel room. The interracial relationship ignites the economic and political separation within the community and brings it to the surface of the dominant psyche. Within every society, those in dominant positions seek to maintain the status quo while those in subordinate positions seek change. Those who occupy positions of authority control subordinates. Since authority is legitimate, sanctions can be brought to bear against those who do not comply with the rules of the dominant power. Jay supported by his Indian relatives and friends, forbids Mina to see Demetrius as it replicates Okelo's comment to Jay. Jay does not want his daughter experience the same racial

attitude he had and suffers as a result of that attitude. He believes that the racial issue is so ingrained in the conscious of people that even best friends cannot do anything to resolve the problem.

Demetrius does business with Indian motel owners and cleans the carpets in several motels run by Indians and whites. To start his business, he secures a bank loan from a white-owned bank, but only after his father's white employer vouches for him. Demetrius's path to securing the capital for his business highlights Blacks' continuing economic dependency on whites and the status quo in the economic sphere. The racial conflict, caused by the affair, leads to an economic conflict in the community when the white debtors and hotel owners as well as Indian ones do not give Demetrius any work. They start sanctions that aim to punish those who cross racial and economic borders. The economic and racial dynamics are acted out to remind people of their place in a community where borders are determined by the dominant power. Therefore, Demetrius stands to lose his van and his customers in the community. The Asian and white motel owners boycott Demetrius' business, and the white-owned bank recalls his loan. The bank manager argues that Demetrius lost most of his local clients because of his affair with an Indian girl. Thus, he loses his ability to pay upcoming installments to the bank. The meeting with the bank manager reminds viewers of the master-slave dialectic in which the bank manager behaves as supreme authority and power that has the ability to control the business while reminding Demetrius and Tayron their place through "character, credit, collateral, capital, and [color]." As an intelligent and capable African American entrepreneur, Demetrius is squeezed out of opportunities to compete for upward mobility and achieve business success.

With the bank manager's role, the film unmasks the politics of dominant power and develops a space-based narrative to highlight the haunting influence of the region's past. In this

context, the geographical spaces in which the film locates the events and characters are significant to create a sense of historical documentation of the past. Nair sets up a historical journey and connects the displacement and arrival of Indians to the arrival of African to America. The Loha family leaves Uganda and their journey to Greenwood is displayed through a cartographic trace, or what Frederick Jameson calls "cognitive mapping" (234). Fredric Jameson defines cognitive mapping as a process by which the individual subject situates himself within a vaster, unrepresentable totality, a process that corresponds to the workings of ideology. This ideological process of cognitive mapping enables the reader to see the relation between ideological process and locating oneself geographically. Nair reconceptualizes the arrival of labor from Africa to America and denounces the perpetuation of economically exploitative and politically suppressive hegemonic power. By using cognitive mapping, Nair creates a space to depict that, as Chandra T. Mohanty states, "a place on a map …is also a locatable place in history" (111). Greenwood thus, plays a significant role with its connection to history. Through the cognitive mapping, the film locates the spaces of Greenwood and Kampala in history showing how both places are associated with slavery and human exploitation. Using the cognitive mapping as a nonlinguistic code, Nair associates these spaces and histories of labor with larger historical and global connections.

In addition to the cognitive mapping through the cartographic map, another colonial and global connection that Nair uses is given through the mélange of African, Indian, African-American actors and the world-beat soundtrack music that accompanies the film. The film begins with Ugandan drums rhythms, uses traditional Indian music during the journey of the Loha family to the airport, and over the ocean the music shifts to electric blues to imply the travel of labor through continents due to colonialism. The nonlinguistic codes, music, and sound effects used

during the film play significant topographic and historical roles to connect the labor traumas of Africa and America. In the film, I argue that music functions as a regional marker to depict the labor histories of the globalized regions. In other words, music reveals much about the dynamic character of the relationship between places, labor and belonging through time and space. It creates an engagement between the audience and the fictional world of the screen. In addition, music confirms the locale and era and their connections with labor, race and class. Thus, the film maps the southern landscape from a different generic and critical route, enlarging the spatial borders of the American South by "extricat[ing] the region from national model and from a North-South binary" (Monteith 1).

Music and sound effects, as nonlinguistic codes, weave the history and labor experience in the film's fictional U.S. South. The narrative of the film offers a meditation to labor trauma by playing blues in the liquor shop. Therefore, the film frequently applies these codes to highlight the historical background. In addition to the music changes during the cognitive mapping in the opening scenes, another scene that depicts labor and music relation is in Kinnu's liquor shop, which associates music and African American labor history in the South. Skillet, an African American, plays harmonica and sings blues in return for some beer and cash. With this scene the film makes a connection between music, identity, and economy in the American social and economic landscape. As Houston Baker states in *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*[10] (1984), blues "mediates creativity and commerce" (9). Blues is a powerful

[10] Baker employs poststructuralism and the emerging new history and cultural criticism, perspectives that support his use of blues as a tropological expression of both black literature and vernacular culture. He works towards a definition of American vernacular literature using the formal and social implications of blues as a paradigm for both black culture and American culture at the vernacular level.

music genre associated with black liberation. For Baker, "blues erupts, creating a veritable playful festival of meaning. Rather than a personalized form, the blues offer a phylogenetic recapitulation—a nonlinear, freely associative, nonsequential meditation—of species experience" (5). The blues played in the liquor shop is not personalized and restricted to the performance of Skillet; rather, it is associated with African American labor and culture in general.

The rich music of the blues came out of the struggles of mostly black sharecroppers and tenant farmers whose lives were marked by poverty and hardship. Nair's Greenwood reminds the viewer of these hardships and portrays blues as a source of strength for the African American community. The blues, in addition to being expressive and communicative through verbal and rhythmic forms, is performative as labor. It is the product of the lived experiences of African Americans, which include displacement, labor trauma, dehumanization, and acculturation. Nair makes a crucial point concerning the ways the blues operates in the "social and economic arrangements of a nation whose primal labor arrangements are based on slavery" (Rushdy 63).

During the Reconstruction following the Civil War and on into the early twentieth century, bluesmen and blueswomen made known the concerns of immediate social relevance by voicing disappointment in politicians, disparaging the half-hearted attempts of local relief agencies to aid the destitute and criticizing the ineffectiveness of the New Deal. One of the many tragedies that arose during Reconstruction and afterward was the fate of the sharecroppers, often ex-slaves essentially trapped by debt in a legal form of slavery. The sharecroppers' options were grim: remain where they were, hopelessly in debt, or move on to another area, risking the chance of making a living elsewhere. The sharecropper's dilemma was captured in blues lyrics, although not necessarily in a straightforward manner. Thus, when Skillet plays the tunes of the blues, his music

becomes performative, which highlights the hardships that African Americans experienced. The transaction between Kinnu and Skillet is the embodiment of this performativity.

Nair propagates the anguish resulting from the social conditions of oppressed labor force and via the blues singer, Skillet, intertwines existence and survival of labor of color and defends their consciousness. In other words, Nair's representation of the blues functions as a social commentary and resistance against the dehumanizing, oppressive, and disenfranchising logic of late capitalism. In the economic space of the liquor shop, Kinnu functions as a female entrepreneur, and provides income to Skillet. The transaction between Skillet and Kinnu portrays the logic of the market economy. The relationship between music and economy bridges, as Appadurai would put it, the colonial and modern labor scapes in Kinnu's liquor shop. While the blues represents the African American tradition, Kinnu, by singing traditional music in Indian ceremonies connects two histories through music and labor.

By placing Kinnu in an economic relation in the liquor shop, Nair pays special attention to the ways in which gender alters the immigrant story from that seen in the traditional immigrant narratives. The role of labor has been an important aspect of immigrant narratives and Nair's narrative continues the tradition of highlighting the experiences of work but from a feminist perspective. In this sense, the film situates immigrant women as breadwinners and glosses over Jay's work as a lawyer of the motel, which is almost nonexistent in the film except for his suing the "mad government of a mad country" to get his property back. To strengthen the role of the female work labor, Nair problematizes the situation of the immigrant female labor in a space that relies heavily on patriarchal gender roles that construct her labor as a natural extension of her being a woman. For that reason, her female characters struggle to achieve their economic freedom.

Criticizing traditional perceptions and emphasizing Kinnu's role in the labor space, the film provides experiences that can easily overcome the conflict of racism and labor exploitation in the narrative. By placing Kinnu in an entrepreneur position and running a liquor shop in black district of Greenwood, Nair complicates the ongoing discussions about the role of female in labor space. Even though the displacement is not openly represented as traumatic, Kinnu's relation to economic space and counting money imply the hidden trauma of labor in her psyche. She belonged to an upper class family back in Uganda; however, she lost all her possessions and status with the expulsion. Although she conquers and triumphs over the hardships she encounters, her past memory of Uganda and being displaced by the dominant power haunts her psyche. The trauma is justifiable through Kinnu's fear of losing her job. For that reason, the absence of romanticization of Kinnu's labor works to create an opportunity to achieve economic success and to eventually put down her roots in a sustainable labor space.

Her determination to achieve economic success leads her to refuse Jay's offer to go back to Uganda. In this regard, the female immigrant is represented as being independent of male domination. As a result, she does not earn her position in the new world through male protection and sexualization, but through her strong will and resistance to hegemony and disempowerment. By attempting to differentiate Kinnu from other Indian women and defining the labor she performs, Nair challenges the perpetuation of ideology that confines female labor to domestic spaces. Local gossip criticizes Kinnu's running a liquor shop in the black section of the town. According to this gossip, Kinnu violates and crosses racial and cultural borders by operating the liquor shop.

On the other hand, in contrast to Kinnu's work, the film portrays working class solidarity via Mina's position at the motel where she works as a help desk, bathroom cleaner, or maid. Mina

is happy working at the motel. Jay, however, wants her to go to college. He follows the ancestral belief that education is the best property that one can have. Jay states that he does not want his daughter to clean bathrooms and work at the motel as "[she] is too intelligent to clean bathrooms." However, Mina responds in a defensive manner stating "there is nothing wrong with cleaning the bathrooms." The romanticization of the motel work is described as a normal process and is further strengthened when Mina and Demetrius decide to leave Greenwood to look for a job. Mina tells him that she "know[s] how to clean rooms" and they can be partners in cleaning motel rooms. It is the dominant ideology that they are trying to escape from as it controls the labor space and does not offer many opportunities for the people of color. Although the film portrays completely different types of labor and obscure the exploitation, both Kinnu and Mina are successful. Their success is based on the relation between space and economy.

Throughout the film space and economy play a significant role in terms of defining labor in contemporary U.S. South. One of the scenes that skillfully depicts the relationship between space and economy is the first scene in Greenwood. The opening scene in Greenwood moves across the multicultural landscapes of Mississippi, depicting daily lives of African Americans and Indians, and complicates the racial division of labor. Mina is twenty-two now and wheels a shopping cart full of gallons of milk at the grocery store. On her way to check out, she passes pyramids of Coke cans, which Nair uses as a symbol of American colonialism all around the world to display the American imperialism. During the background scene in a restaurant table, the audiences see an African American working as a waiter. This and following scenes criticize the stereotyping of the jobs that African Americans are associated with. One of these low-status jobs

that pay little and offer little by way of advancement is related with food, and service economies, which imply the haunting ghost of the former plantation economy.

In connection with the plantation economy and slavery, Nair suggests the fact that opportunities might also be restricted due to race. In this stratification, Nair re-negotiates placing African Americans among the most severely disadvantaged workers in job market. This is what leads most people to leave Mississippi in search of better job opportunities and equal treatment. Tyrone, an African American character, leaves Mississippi when the white-owned bank repossesses Demetrius's van and leaves no chance them to continue their business. In the stratification of races in terms of job market, Whites represent the dominant power, while Indians take a middle place between whites and blacks. In some cases, Indians and blacks are equal in terms of jobs they work in Greenwood. For example, Mina and her African American friend both work at an Indian motel as maids.

In the first scene in Greenwood, Nair uses cognitive narrative techniques effectively in which the audience encounters the perpetuation of labor division. The camera follows Mina outside the shop and slowly shifts from an Indian woman counting dollar bills to a black teenager loading groceries into the truck. While the cashier is a white male, the boy who carries the groceries to the car is an African American. In the background, two African American men unload the "Budweiser" truck in front of the market "Piggly Wiggly." The black labor portrayed at the background emphasizes that they are not playing an important role in labor market and seen appropriate to the secondary types of jobs which require physical skills. This scene suggests a class difference between a typical middle class Indian immigrant who has attained material success in the United States and black workers who are relegated to menial labor. The scene becomes a

powerful visual tool in creating and perpetuating images of the immigration of people of color and providing a rich text for analysis because of the way it represents immigration, labor of color, and the haunting ghost of the plantation mindset.

The narrative includes many vignettes about the Indian family's social and cultural adjustments in a small southern town, but the main thrust of the film is the labor and class differences. On her way back home from the supermarket Mina is involved in an accident and hits a cleaning van, which belongs to Demetrius. The accident in which Mina comes in contact with Demetrius is an important scene in the development of the labor narrative and the place of the people of color in the ladder of labor. Several times during the film Demetrius emphasizes that he owns his business and describes Mississippi as "The new Mississippi," as opposed to the old one which is associated with poverty and labor exploitation as well as slavery. However, although the "New Mississippi" as a conceptual territory offers credibility, reliability and stability, it does not offer economic equality to the people of color. The way to stay and survive in New Mississippi is to have "a good business," in that case, as Demetrius says, "there is no reason to leave." Through Demetrius's articulation, Nair highlights that blacks can own their jobs in modern Mississippi with the help and support of whites, although it appears that Nair dismantles the master-slave dialectic and portrays Mississippi as a space which, as Jay Watson puts it, "represents equal opportunity to the young entrepreneur" (241). Using cognitive mapping, Nair suggests that having such an opportunity does not guarantee upward mobility to the people of color since everything is controlled by the dominant white power.

Nair successfully incorporates space with significant events to portray the influence and manipulation of white dominant power to address the historical significance of labor and class. I

argue that the accident scene by the railroad in which Mina hits Demetrius's van is an important scene in the development of the narrative as the railroad functions like a "contact zone" for various cultures and ethnicities. The film uses labor as part of the experience encountered by the immigrant protagonists in the "contact zone." I adapt Mary Louise Pratt's term "contact zone"[11] for the space where Indian and African American cultures meet, clash, and come to terms with each other negotiating the highly asymmetrical relations of power. The accident happens at the juncture of a railroad, which symbolically connects the history of Indian labor in Uganda and African American labor in the South. In labor histories of Indians and African Americans, railroad construction is associated with slave labor.

The railroad becomes an historical symbol as the railroads in the region were constructed with slave labor just like the Indian labor in Uganda. As Jay Watson writes, the railroad "links the pasts of Demetrius and Mina while placing a specifically southern geography of injustice within the larger context of white colonial power" (236). In this sense, the accident scene and the railroad become a contact zone "where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other often in highly asymmetrical racial relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived" (34). Through this scene, Nair constructs a dynamic space with examples of border crossings. The social and perceptual space is used as a crossroad to imply a multiple connectedness

[11] Mary Louise Pratt's article "Arts of the Contact Zone" http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=mla Pratt's essay seems to be one about literacy and its importance, seeing as that is what the first line clearly stated with a story that supported this idea. But as the essay began to weave its way through history, the purpose became less clear, it made you search for the answer, the idea, the focus. She had this theory about the "contact zone" as a place where culture and language and literacy and ideas all met to form something that was different and interesting. It is interesting to think, for example, of American slave autobiography in its auto-ethnographic dimensions, which in some respects distinguish it from Euro-American autobiographical tradition."

of the hierarchical relations, which are often conflicting with one another in the South. Through these highly asymmetrical situations of power between cultures, Nair recontextualizes labor and class divisions by situating the accident just before a railroad, which represents labor and global connection as well as class distinction or residential and racial separation. The railroad crossing, underscoring the South as pluralistic, represents a transnational cultural contact zone in addition to being a temporal and hybrid space, which enables the residents, and new comers negotiate their identity and belonging.

Although there have been some remarkable gains in the labor status of racial minorities, significant disparities remain. Following the accident scene, the camera moves to a street where a bunch of "crack heads" fool around singing and rapping, which depicts daily street lives of unemployed disadvantaged African American youngsters, one of whom is Demetrius's brother; Dexter. What distinguishes this scene specifically is that it presents well-known social and racial differences and investigates those differences through the powerful metaphoric significance of visual images. Nair cognitively complicates the labor division based on race. Unemployment becomes a consequence of the isolation/separation of individuals within their self-contained worlds. For that reason, the young people in the street waste their time as there are no job opportunities for them. The visual images in this scene become powerful tools for creating and perpetuating images of the immigration of people of color and provide a rich text for analysis. These visual images represent immigration, labor and exploitation of disadvantaged groups by the hegemonic power. One of these people wears a necklace which bears a map of Africa, while another one wears a t-shirt with Malcom X poster and scriptures on it. Through these visual images,

Nair connects labor history with postcolonial history in connection with diasporic identities; thus, attributes her characters transnationality and treats them as global subjects.

Demetrius arrives at the scene and scolds his brother and wants him go find a job. However, Dexter's answer reflects the political and economic labor paradigms in the South. Dexter complains that the people in the employment office always have an excuse and they tell him that he goes there too much and emphasize that war veterans have priority. This is a presence of a more subtle or subconscious form of discrimination. In other words, Nair, through Dexter, problematizes persistent racial inequality in employment and labor spaces. Visual and cultural codes given through the images and the background scene with a lot of black people, is a cognitive decoding of haunting ghost of segregation that crippled the self-confidence and belief of equality among people of color.

There are some spaces in which dominantly blacks are employed: food and service industry. These types of jobs arguably do not need mental or intellectual contribution; what they need is workers who simply follow the basic rules that anyone can learn and repetitively use those rules to serve customers. The restaurant in *Mississippi Masala* where Willie Ben, Demetrius's father works, is an example of a space where African Americans have a chance to find a stable job. Accompanied with the blues in the background Willie Ben serves the all-white customers in a white-owned restaurant. This is one of the rare scenes that we see the whites when they are not at work and control of others. All of the customers are white–white businessmen, young white people and an old white couple, whereas all workers in the kitchen and waiters are African Americans. The white customers are also at rest while the African Americans are serving, replicating not only the roles on a plantation, but emphasizing the value of white labor versus black

labor. White labor is visible, black labor invisible. In this way Nair corroborates the persistence of plantation consciousness that segregates people and employs the rhetoric of underprivileged.

This segregation is intelligently depicted with colorful curtains, which separate rooms from the aisle in the restaurant. When Willie Ben opens the curtains, the audiences see the other side of the curtain behind which the hegemonic power that perpetuates class and labor divisions can be seen in a jovial and carefree mode. The material segregation performed by the curtain also functions as racial segregation between the black waiter and the white customers. This is another scene in which Nair uses cognitive psychology to problematize the stereotyping of blacks with certain types of jobs. When Demetrius arrives to visit his father, white restaurant owner talks to her friend about Demetrius and states that Demetrius is "the good one" in the family and her husband helped him to start his business. "The good one" implies that the other in the family is the bad one, but inadequately explains the reasons why the others are not good. Nair complicates the perceptions about underprivileged not that they are bad, rather they are those who are not given chance to work and prove themselves as obedient citizens. Nair depicts that in modern post-southern space, whites are an economically and politically dominant power who "control the means of production and thus dominate the society" (Delaney 2005).

Mississippi Masala conceives a utopic space where black /brown alliances overcome cultural differences and colonialist economic conditions. In this space class and race do not define economic agency. In contrast to the conceived utopic space, the film portrays the existing space as dystopic realities of white oppression. Throughout the film, the audience encounters various types of jobs that African Americans are associated with. The highest status of job that an African American has is the police officer at the beginning scene. In addition to the restaurant labor

mentioned above, there are two culture specific jobs that African Americans have in the film. The first is the barbershop which significantly reflects the culture of the region and race. It is a social space in which people share daily news, their problems, and the latest gossip. When the African American community hears the events that led to the collapse of Demetrius's business, the barbershop becomes an appropriate place to articulate their internal jealousy, which is highlighted by the barber as he states "black folk don't like to see other black folk do good [....] They just sit back on their butts and wait to see if you fall on your face." The attitudes of some black people against Demetrius imply that trying to reach beyond one's labor level is not approved or supported, and it is mocked when unsuccessful.

When Demetrius loses all his customers and the bank wanted to repossess the van, there is only one thing left to Demetrius; to leave the place and look for a job in another state. The decision to leave Greenwood is not only the result of racial but also economic reasons. Demetrius is ostracized by the Greenwood community and the bank aimed to confiscate his van. For that reason, he was unable to find a job, and moving to another state offers him more chance of employment. Mina and Demetrius represent values of individuality, small entrepreneurship, family, work and discipline. They embody the classic conception of the American dream. At the end of the film, Mina and Demetrius have not found a way to integrate the dual knowledge of their ancestral heritage and new world culture, yet they found a way to emancipate themselves from the constraints of a colonial and oppressive culture. Their departure together is symbolic.

They leave to pursue both a personal and economic life together. Thus, they plan to advance economically with each other rather than at the expense of the other. I read the final scene from a labor perspective and claim that by separating the couple from their communities and detaching

the connection with labor exploitation and forced displacement from Africa and Mississippi, the film offers an extended reading of labor unrestricted with a geographical region. In other words, I argue that the final scene connects the South to the rest of the country and the globe by moving away from Africa and Mississippi. Thus, the problem of labor and color dichotomy is not restricted to the Deep South. It becomes a national problem. The film closes not in the South facing and reaching toward Africa and Asia but in an empty field, moving into an unmarked America. This vast empty field implies the mobility of labor and disavows the confinement to a place. The resolution of the immigrant narrative lies not only in the romantic relation between Mina and Demetrius, but also addressing the relation between labor and cultural history of the space. Mina and Demetrius actually do not leave Mississippi; the film does not end with their departure but with a scene that implies that they will not be able to severe their ties with their ancestral past and the past of the region.

Mina and Demetrius, who kiss blissfully in the final scene, purchase their togetherness at a high price: exiled from family and community, they face an uncertain future with neither a destination-point nor a means of subsistence. Despite an apparently optimistic ending, the film could not deliver its characters out of imperialism's unhappy legacy. The final scene creates an engagement with the history of labor and displacement in Mississippi through the successful usage of visual codes. Mina wears a colorful shawl with cultural traces of different ethnicities that reminds the viewers of the Native American displacement and removal from Mississippi. This is one of the thematic concerns of the film which is related to displacement and belonging to a space. It constitutes a positive acknowledgement and recognition of difference, which is not appropriated within the discourse of a stereotype in which it would figure as always already known as the

"Other." It is the scene that also reminds us the liberal ideas of multiculturalism that acknowledge cultural differences and contribute to the cultural diversity of the region.

The resolution of immigrant narrative lies not only in the romantic relationship between Mina and Demetrius, but also in the saving and remembering racial and labor history of the region aligned with the cotton fields in the background in the final scene. The scene activates the historical memory of Mississippi by cueing the viewers to review and remember earlier events connecting deep-rooted displacement and quest of a hybrid space that would enable people of all creeds and races live in harmony. The couple's positioning at the end of the film and not leaving the state may seem arbitrary and ridiculous or endless. There are moments of visual and mental perception and subjectivity in which Nair re-inscribes the paradigm of British colonial economy and plantation economy of slavery within the historical context. This final scene is a cognitive remapping and reconceptualization of the post-southern space. Through the rhetoric of labor and cultural history of the region, which is associated with forced displacement and labor exploitation, the film negotiates with the past and reinforces the multicultural heterogeneous region.

With *Mississippi Masala* Nair contributes to the theorization and contextualization of the evolving and expanding field of southern studies and film. She has imagined the "'South' both to construct and to unsettle national narratives" (Barker 1). *Mississippi Masala* complicates labor and class divisions in the South; Nair literally stretches the traditional boundaries of the region through the backgrounds and histories of the characters she has chosen. In doing so, she engages in conversation with those, such as Houston Baker, Deborah Cohn, and J. Smith, who offered the "new Southern Studies" and called the region "The South." She contributes the conceptual extension of "The South" through cinema. In this context *Mississippi Masala* explores paradigm

shifts in the South. These shifts, both demographic and cultural, create stimuli to analyze complicated national, hemispheric and global narratives of labor. The film's closing sequences seemed to offer audience a cutting-edge spectacle of hybridity: Jay holds a Ugandan baby in his arms while watching a Ugandan woman dance in a Kampala street; Mina, in a mirror-worked Indian-print cotton dress, embraces Demetrius, whose cotton cap and long tunic look equally Indian and African; and the background music morphs seamlessly from an Indian melody to a mournful blues riff played on a harmonica to an upbeat Swahili song performed by a fusion band. By interweaving these scenes, as Jigna Desai writes in *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (2004), the film suggests that Mina's relationship with Demetrius is a part of process of remembering, restructuring, and healing from colonial legacy of racial hierarchy experienced through gender (79). The narrative turns to romance as the solution to the situation of racism in the United States and the history of colonial and postcolonial relations in Africa and as the site of reconciliation of interracial injustices.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have analyzed immigrant labor in contemporary southern literature to depict how modern texts and cultural products display the demographic, cultural and intellectual representations of the U.S. South. The southern authors analyzed in this dissertation are writing about hybrid experiences in the Global and Multicultural U.S. South to depict demographic and cultural changes. As such, they portray changes to the American South, as well as the realities of immigrant and multicultural reception in a region that often views itself as stable and unchanging, and has therefore historically been inhospitable and even hostile to marginal groups. I have looked at three novels and a film in which the South was depicted as multicultural and global space with immigrant experience. The texts analyzed in this dissertation also show how regional borders and exclusionary identities have always been a myth for those considered "southern" and they contribute to the discussion fundamental to the development of a more global and pluralistic region.

In the introduction of this project, I introduced Saskia Sassen's Globalization theory and Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism* and Tariq Modood's *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* as well as Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity. These scholars embrace a paradigm of multiculturalism that incorporates a hybrid consciousness within a diverse culture. While binaries of identity ask us to define ourselves against the "Other," the authors and the texts in this dissertation encourage us to learn who we are in relation to the defined other while acknowledging the cultural construction of this binary. These texts suggests that we define ourselves inside and outside of this binary, through accepting and accommodating principles of diversity.

Building on the theories of labor, globalization, and multiculturalism, I argued that contemporary texts analyzed in this project create a new universal paradigm of hybridity and multiculturalism through immigrant labor, while challenging and problematizing the old myths and plantation economy that exploit human labor. The texts discussed in this project portray a vibrant and dynamic southern space where insiders and outsiders are intrinsically, historically and culturally interconnected. The interconnectedness of the world based on borderless economy and global governance shapes the recent understanding of globalization. Interconnectedness in the texts analyzed is especially displayed through the web and history of slavery, colonialism and imperialism that have marked a constant process of globalization and cultural contact. To display the interconnectedness, I analyze texts utilizing immigrant narrative theories. While traditional immigrant narratives were mainly attributing the reason of immigration to the "American Dream," contemporary narratives depict more pluralistic and global approach to the immigration and state the reason more as political rather than economic.

In this sense, the texts I have chosen position immigrant labor in contemporary U.S. South, allowing for a more global perspective of labor and multicultural U.S. South. Southern ideologies affect the ways immigrants and minorities negotiate and challenge hegemonic and bicultural identities in the U.S. South. The texts also challenge the idea that the U.S. South perpetuates and normalizes systems of segregation and inequality that invade multiple southern institutions. Therefore, the authors of these texts problematize the interlocking systems of oppression and exploitation based on a Black/White racial history and reassess and reconstruct immigrant labor and therefore ethnic and cultural diversity in the U.S. South. The texts enable the readers to get

beyond ideas of monolithic regional culture and thus offer more sophisticated ways to explore the changing face and economy of the multicultural U.S. South.

In Chapter One, I analyzed the ways in which exiled female Cuban immigrant labor is portrayed in *Holy Radishes!* The female characters in the radish-packing house disrupt the fantasies of "city on the hill" and unproblematic assimilation into national belonging through carnivalesque and grotesque depictions of the female characters that are silenced and disempowered. The descriptive narrative of the text calls for different strategies of dealing with the presence of immigrant female workers in a region dominated by dualism. By characterizing the workers as exploited and abused by the exploitative logic of late capitalism, in conjunction with historical wounds, *Holy Radishes!* aims to minimize some of the social inequalities and cultural misunderstandings that create conflicts between outsiders and insiders. Thus, through these characters, the text creates a space for questioning the hybrid identity and culture that leads to the recognition of diverse cultures and beliefs that become significant components of multiculturalism.

In chapter two, I analyzed the condition of undocumented workers in the U.S. South in connection with historical labor trauma in the region. Different from other texts, *A Man in Full* aims to depict the undocumented immigrant problem and raise awareness on illegal immigrants through placing a white American into the position of an undocumented immigrant. In doing so, the text relates the modern day problem of illegal immigrants to the plantation memory. To problematize the condition of the immigrants, the text reminds the readers of slavery.

In Chapter Three, I analyzed immigrant labor and the casino business, examining how Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox* acknowledges traditional immigration narratives and

presents labor in relation to historical traumas and plantation logic. Shearer positions immigration within a region that is multicultural and permeated with cross-cultural interactions. Playing with immigrant stereotypes, Shearer allows readers to view immigration and labor in the region in ways that mirror the logic of late capitalism, reminding them of the labor history of the region through slavery and plantation logic. As the novel progresses, she constructs a world in which multiculturalism is perceived as a diversity of ethnicities and cultures in which immigrants negotiate their past and present, and are be able to set up a strong identity and future. In doing so, Shearer forces the reader to critique cultural assumptions about immigrant labor and labor exploitation. Shearer utilizes national and regional conflicts and displays personal transformation and social progress in a contemporary southern context.

The last chapter analyzed Mira Nair's 1991 film *Mississippi Masala,* which portrays forms of labor and relations between African Americans and Asians (Indians) in the South. The film reveals processes of cross-cultural connections that require viewing ourselves as Other and analyzing our roles in "othering" to maintain certain social privileges. As I argued, *Mississippi Masala* characterizes those "others" in a distinct manner and through the discursive construction of immigrants' lives, the film condenses the contradictory political, cultural, and psychological effects of colonial conquest (Trefzer 676). Gwendolyn Audrey Foster explains that there is a dialogic voice in the film that criticizes disunity between people of color, the dystopic realities of white oppression, and the perpetuation of economic exploitation of people of color (121). The film explores life on the edges of society, and the struggles of Indian and African American laborers in Mississippi. Since the life of motel workers is a highway culture, they are not visible to the normal passerby. Indian motel owners and workers populate most of the hotels in the South that are not

chains. In *Mississippi Masala,* Nair presents a new description of labor through global lenses in a society informed by the global logic of domination and exploitation. Nair rewrites the labor story in aesthetic and romantic terms.

Together, my texts offer various perspectives of local and immigrant encounters and dramatize how these encounters transform the space from regional to global space. These encounters articulate different negotiation strategies, and provide warnings and suggestions that challenge dominant cultural narratives. I have centered my project on immigration labor and immigrants in order to analyze the unique ways their presence in the South adds to our understanding of cultural diversity and interdependent identity formations. Immigrant labor and its historical and global connections enable us to think about the region as a global and multicultural space rather than as a merely regional and monolithic space. This approach allows us to deconstruct cultural and political ideologies, and racial binaries based on multicultural and globalization theories. The texts analyzed in this dissertation depict the necessity to reconstruct the scope of the southern studies and extend the borders of the southern studies to the Global South. In doing so, the dissertation reconstructs regional identity and culture which problematize inequities, second-class citizenship status, and unfair treatment of non-white citizens and immigrants alike.

Disciplines such as Sociology and Psychology are advancing qualitative and quantitative studies of these experiences, and writers are submitting their literary voices, but literary theorists must also engage in this discussion through interdisciplinary studies that combine the personal with the political, and the anecdotal with the quantitative. In the interpersonal realm, southerners must create a space for these emerging voices by embracing diversity in new definitions of

community that privilege allying over oppression, and shared power over social inequality. The welcomed presence of immigrant authors by general audiences and academic readers leaves me optimistic that we are spiraling upwards, gaining transformative powers through their strength. These new immigration narratives allow southern insiders and outsiders to witness the changes to constructions of identity, culture, gender, race, and class in the region and the rest of the U.S.

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