Re-envisioning "The South": Immigration and Postsouthern Place in Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox*

Cynthia Shearer'in *The Celestial Jukebox* adlı Eserinde Göçmenlik ve Post-Güney Mekan

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Abstract
The US South has been defined as a backward and agrarian space with its monolithic structure that maintained the plantation nostalgia. Due to its plantation history, the *Lost Cause*, and being a part of Bible belt, the US South and specifically Mississippi was not open to transformation. However, the impact of globalization and emerging international corporations created a paradigm shift. Historian James L. Peacock suggests that "globalization has the capacity to fundamentally transform the South" as southerners tend to define themselves in a global context rather than a regional one (17). The arrival of immigrant workers not only changed the region demographically but also culturally. This inspired the depiction of the impacts of new cultural and demographic change on conventional notions of region and space. Within this scope, this paper seeks to analyze Cynthia Shearer's novel *The Celestial Jukebox* (2005) to discuss the paradigm shift in defining the South. The paper first presents historical ideas of the South, explains what the South and multiple Souths mean, introduces postmodern spatial theory and then utilizing postmodern spatial theory, the article attempts to discuss how immigration and globalization changed the culture, recognition, and perception of the region using two public spaces in *The Celestial Jukebox.*
Keywords: The South, immigration, space, memory, nostalgia, Cynthia Shearer.

Öz
Geleneksel olarak, Amerikan'ın Güney eyaletleri kendine has içine kapanık ve tek tip yapılanmasıyla geri kalmış ve kölelik kurumu ve çiftliklerinin mantığını devam ettirmiş veya devam ettirme niyetinde olan tarıma dayalı bir bölge olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Köle çiftlikleri, Kaybedilmiş Savaş ve "Bible belt" denilen dinin çok katı olarak yaşandığı bir bölge olma gerçeğinden dolayı, Amerika'nın güneyi, özellikle de konu ettiğimiz eserin mekânı olan Mississippi, değişime açık bir yer değildi. Ancak, küreselleşmenin etkisi ve uluslararası şirketlerin ortaya çıkması değerler dizisi değişikliğine yol açmıştır. Tarihçi James L. Peacock'un dediği gibi "küreselleşme Güneyi temelden değiştirme kapasitesine sahiptir" (17) çünkü güneyliler kendilerini artık yerel değil daha çok küresel olarak tanımlama eğilimindedirler. Göçmen işçilerin gelişi bölgeyi sadece demografik olarak değil aynı zamanda kültürel olarak da değiştirmiştir. Bu gerçeklik birçok yazar için ilham konusu olmuş ve geleneksel bölge ve mekân tanımlamasına kültürel ve demografik değişimin nasıl bir etki yaptığını tasvir etmişlerdir. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin amacı Cynthia Shearer'in *The Celestial Jukebox* romanında küreselleşmenin ve göçmenlerin nasıl bir değerler dizisi değişikliği meydana getirdiğini analiz etmektir. Bunu gerçekleştirmek için makale ilk olarak

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Güney'i tarihsel kavram olarak tanımlamakta ve Güney ve Çoklu Güney kavramlarına açıklık getirmeyi hedeflemekte ve daha sonra Mekân teorisi üzerinden metinde geçen iki mekânı inceleyerek göçmenlerin ve küreselleşmenin Güney'i ve bölgenin algısını nasıl değiştirdiğini göstermeyi hedeflemektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Güney, göçmenlik, mekan, anı, nostalji, Cynthia Shearer.

> [T]his latest mutation –postmodern hyperspace– has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.
>
> -- Fredric Jameson

We cannot study American literature and culture in the early twenty-first century without considering its global connections which gained momentum the previous century and resulted from unprecedented forms of emigration and immigration. Southern literature, inevitably, portrayed demographic and spatial changes introduced by diverse ethnicities and economies because the impact of globalization through capital flows, immigration, foodways, and information technologies has been visible in every aspect of daily life. The region is home to millions of immigrants from the Far East–Vietnam, China, and Korea–to Latin America, Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. Thus, mass migration triggered unprecedented changes in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the region. One significant paradigm shift occurred via globalization and immigration that transformed the region from historically defined black/white and North/South binaries into multiethnic and multicultural transnational region. As James L. Peacock argues globalization is transforming both the South and the ways in which southerners perceive the region and regional identity. Peacock suggests that "globalization has the capacity to fundamentally transform the South" as southerners tend to define themselves in a global context rather than a regional one (17). This factuality has inspired many writers to depict the impacts of new cultural and demographic change on conventional notions of region and space.

Within this scope, this paper seeks to analyze Cynthia Shearer's novel *The Celestial Jukebox* (2005) as a case study to discuss how immigration and globalization introduced a paradigm shift in defining the South. In this regard, the paper, first, presents the historical ideas of the South, explains what the South and multiple Souths mean, introduces postmodern spatial theory and then utilizes postmodern spatial theory to historicize immigration and globalization and using two public spaces, The Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery, aims to discuss how immigration and globalization reshapes

southern spaces. The essay concludes by addressing significant areas of further research in Shearer's text.

Global Movements and the Transformation of the U.S. South

Most of the Americans and foreigners alike thought the U.S. South to be backward, remote, mysterious, and even dangerous with "its spiritual and intellectual barrenness, [...] religious fundamentalism" (Griffin 26). One of the most significant aspects of the old South is that it retained the "peculiar institution" of slavery, racial segregation, and white supremacy dominated the region by law, custom, and force. The Old South was poor, bereft of justice and economic opportunities. Franklin Roosevelt publicly proclaimed the region to be the nation's "number one economic problem" (qtd. Griffin 18). In *Inventing Southern Literature*, Michael Kreyling explains that the idea of "the South" in literature is a construct and an "imaginary" place "created by an arbitrary set of social formations" (6). Therefore, southern fiction comprises a series of "inventions and reinventions of the South in literature as ways of keeping history at bay" (xii). We no longer study southern literature or southern culture but "southern cultures," indeed, no longer the South but many Souths. In their edited collection, Fred Hobson and Barbara Ladd elaborate the plural Souths in the following manner:

> What had been generally referred to in historical and literary scholarship as "the South" began in the early 1980s to be "the American South" […] and by the late 1990s we began to hear the 'U.S. South,' to signal a focus on the South in and as part of the nation, suggesting that, even within the Western Hemisphere, there were regions of South of South, including the Caribbean and Central and South America, an extending as far as Brazil –regions which had a great deal in common with the U.S. South, at least in its lower regions: tropical and semi-tropical climate, a plantation economy, a legacy of slavery, a colonial past. (9-10)

They suggest that there is a structural continuity between past and present, which is constantly challenged and reconstructed on a "residual culture," to borrow Raymond Williams' term. Then, Southern scholars such as Scott Romine, Martyn Bone, and Jay Watson, referencing some scholars such as Michael Kreyling and Fredric Jameson, discussed what postsouthern is. Postsouthern does not sever ties with the past, yet, as Martyn Bone explains, "*may* signify a break with familiar ideas of 'the South' and 'southern literature,' the etymological retention of 'southern' reminds us of historical continuities with earlier forms of uneven development and exploitation in the region" (*Postsouthern*, 344). In this sense, postsouthern should not be considered as an "end of the South so much as a tradition between Souths, in which 'earlier forms' of regional consciousness, affiliation, and discourse are 'restructured' into new regional identities and stories, [but as] new ways (a new 'stage') of being southern" (Watson 232). Jay Watson states that "a postsouthern South […] appears to rest on no 'real' or reliable foundation of cultural, social, political,

economic, or historical distinctiveness, only on over-proliferating series of representations and commodification of 'southernness'" (219). Another important approach that connects "the South" to larger global South is suggested by Susan Jones and Sharon Monteith. They 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, emphasis mine). Similarly, Barbara Ladd argues that "the local has become the crossroads—contemporary work wants to bridge the local and the global, laying claim to relevance, in and beyond the nation-state" (1636). Shearer's novel, *The Celestial,* in this sense, re-contextualizes global and postcolonial connections through immigration and globalization phenomena that contribute to restructuring and reinventing the meaning and functionality of southern spaces.

The southern states did not attract immigrants in large numbers until the late twentieth century mostly because of its slave-labor based agrarian economy. At the turn of the century, as David Goldfield notes, "small groups of immigrant workers from Europe and China settled in the region, but the vast majority headed to urban areas in the Northeast, Midwest, and West to become part of the industrial workforce" or those stayed in the South did not work in the fields but initiated entrepreneurship (qtd. In Lassiter, 237). Chinese immigrants, for example, who "were recruited to the state by agricultural businessmen hoping to find replacement laborers for their fields after the Civil War," opened grocery stores which became significant landmarks of the rural South (Jung 5). In Shearer's text, an example of these groceries, The Celestial Grocery, is analyzed to depict how the postsouthern space is redefined through immigration.

Following Chinese immigrants, changes in the U.S. immigration policies contributed to the pluralistic and transnational demographics of the region. The Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 abolished existing discriminatory national origin quotas and opened doors for new immigrants. The Immigration ACT of 1924 allowed Chinese immigrants to work in the United States but without their families. In that sense, the ACT of 1965 made family reunification and established visa categories for workers in occupations with insufficient labor supply. After the 1965 Immigration ACT, immigrants reflect the transnational reformation of the space in the South (Altındiş 10). In addition to the ACT, the business expansion in the region, food processing companies, such as Tyson Food in Northwest Arkansas, foreign automobile companies (Toyota, Honda, Nissan, and Mercedes) in Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, and local and foreign corporations such as Wal-Mart (headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas), demanded various types of labor ranging from unskilled labor and construction workers to engineers. Another significant act that brought an influx of immigrants, Latino(a)s, to the region is the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. Under IRCA approximately three million immigrants gained a permanent legal residence in the South (Odem 358). Related to IRCA, historian Raymond Mohl explains 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 have always been slow and received with skepticism (430). As a result of immigration and global economies, the American South became a spatially and demographically transnational center as opposed to backward and isolated old South.

Representations of the American South, therefore, the southern sense of space, have been changing rapidly due to transnational effects of colonialism, globalization, and the rise of technologies. Due to such factors, unprecedented numbers of people now travel to more distant and less visited places. One consequence of such changes is that place and spatiality represent more multicultural and global perceptions and experiences rather than uniquely and distinctively local ones.

Over the past few decades, space has become an essential concept for literary and cultural studies. Among many others[1], Martyn Bone's *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction* and Suzanne Jones and Sharon Monteith's edited collection, *South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture* (2002) highlight multiple geographic sites in order to explore the local, national, and global connections of the US South. In the contemporary world, the South has numerous meanings, and the region is becoming "more fluid than […] parochial axioms would imply" (Jones and Monteith 3). Thus the US South becomes, what Maureen Ryan calls, "a new frontier of cultural hybridism" (qtd. in Jones and Monteith 5). People go to a Mexican or a Chinese restaurant, wear clothes produced in Indonesia, shop in a local farmer's market, and drink Turkish coffee in a small Mediterranean cafe. All these changes emphasize a newer and postmodern concept of space.

Postmodern Spatial Theory and Postsouthern

This section of the paper analyzes the Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery using Lefebvre's classifications of space as mentioned below. These places show how immigration and new corporations have altered the space in the contemporary southern town, which in turn challenges the idea that southern space is still tied to binary representations. The Lucky Leaf Casino and the relations evolved around the Celestial Grocery offer a new language of representation of the contemporary US South, which articulates an epochal transition in material life and multicultural integration through rejecting binary discourses. The ethnicity of the customers and workers in the Celestial Grocery and the Lucky Leaf Casino creates a new space-based ontology, which pictures the South with its economically and racially changing face. In other words, the Celestial Grocery and the Lucky Leaf Casino reject paradigmatic and categorical thinking and investigate alternative ways to interpret and depict the southern

[1] There are several examples from different disciplines such as Ceri Watkins in "Representations of Space, Spatial Practices and Spaces of Representation: An Application of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad" uses Lefebvre's theory to explore organizational space, Jasminah Beebeejaun uses space theory to discuss "Gender, urban space, and the right to live," and Barbara Tversky's article "Structures of Mental Spaces: How people Think About Space"

space by "tear[ing] away [from] its layers of ideological mystification" (Soja 73). In that sense, both the Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery represent a philosophical investigation into the poetics of space with their interior and exterior depictions.

In order to investigate these poetics, this section of the paper aims to introduce postmodern spatial theory in the light of which space is going to be analyzed in the selected work. Numerous influential books and scholars focus on the significance of place and its relation to people inhabiting that space. Edward Soja, for example, in his seminal work *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989) attempts to make "theoretical and practical sense of the contemporary restructuring of capitalist spatiality" (159). He argues that while "space in itself may be primordially given, the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translations, transformations, and experience" (80). He coins the term "spatiality" to capture the dynamic nature of space; Soja's definition of spatiality divulges notions of "naturalness" from space and suggests that spatiality is a dynamic that affects our life experiences. Ultimately, Soja accepts "an essential connection between spatiality and being" (119). In *The Celestial Jukebox*, physical spaces, such as the "Lucky Leaf Casino" and the "Celestial Grocery," influence postmodern experiences of people living in Madagascar while representing the essential connection between space and "being" that Soja refers to. In other words, *The Celestial Jukebox* offers ways to understand how space is constructed, organized, and imbued with power that affects our perception of space. It portrays how the spaces we occupy, inhibit, negotiate, and modify our understanding of the region and, therefore, ourselves.

Another prominent scholar, Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space* (1974) presents the relationships between *physical*, *mental*, and *social spaces*, all of which the paper will be using for the analysis of the place in *The Celestial Jukebox*. Lefebvre argues that "few people today would reject the idea that capital and capitalism 'influence' practical matters relating to space, from the construction of buildings to the distribution of investments and the worldwide division of labor" (9-10). Physical space represents the nature of space, and mental space refers to formal abstractions about the space while social space refers the space of human interaction. These aspects of space are important in analyzing the southern spaces in *The Celestial Jukebox*, because space is a social product, in which there is a close interaction between a place and its inhabitants. Both the Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery, as entities, are multidimensional spaces that can be portrayed and perceived through Lefebvre's modes of physical, mental and social spaces. Their physicality plays a significant role in cognitive mapping of the space while challenging and problematizing historical dilemmas. Physical mode of the space ushers the reader to mental mode which reminds traumas and problematic abusive history of the region that needs to be addressed. Finally, as social spaces, both studied entities bring different aspects of life into communication in the physical space that mentally crosses tangible boundaries. Lefebvre posits that every society

"hence, every mode of production with its sub-variants create their own spaces" (31). From the literary perspective, Eudora Welty, in *The Eye of the Story*, elaborates the significance of place in literature as follows:

> Place absorbs our earliest notice and attention; it bestows on us our original awareness; and our critical powers spring up from the study of it and the growth of experience inside it. It perseveres in bringing us back to earth when we fly too high. It never really stops informing us, for it is for-ever astir, alive, changing, reflecting, like the mind of man itself. When one specific place is comprehended, we can understand other places better. (114)

Welty's depiction of place highlights radical sociospatial and cultural transformation of a locale while inviting the reader to interpret and appreciate the space in a dialogical relationship with other places. Shearer, in her text, portrays the significance of a place and contributes to the reconstructing of the postsouthern space as a global region, thereby, freeing southern literature from traditional conceptual models that reinforce its insularity and exceptionality.

The term "post-southern" was coined by Lewis P. Simpson in his article "The Closure of History in a Postsouthern America" (268). In his collection of essays, *The Brazen Face of History* (1980), Simpson delineates a crucial shift in southern literature from agrarian representation to postmodern. Building upon this term, Michael Kreyling suggests that postsouthern landscape "question[s] the natural authority of the foundation term: *Southern*," which "has been used so much, been invested with so much meaning, that we can no longer distinguish between what if anything is inherent and what other interests have attached [to it] over time" (155). More recently, in his book *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction* (2005), Martyn Bone explores how southern literature establishes a traditional aesthetic or "sense of place." He argues that contemporary southern fiction explores this sense of place as a construction. Bone suggests that "a historical-geographical materialist approach might help us to recover the relation between postsouthern literature and the sociospatial reality of the contemporary (post-)south" (45). From this standpoint, it is the contention of this paper that *The Celestial Jukebox*'s transnational world, with its immigrants and contemporary capitalist spatiality, disrupts received notions of place and southernness. The text suggests that postsouthern sense of place has changed in tandem with globalization, immigration, economic and political advances that have altered the landscape. In *The Celestial,* Shearer presents a visual depiction of a sense of place, which has shifted more toward narrative constructions of southern places that offer stability in a rapidly changing southern culture.

As Bone argues, immigration to the region alters and reconfigures the South, rendering it doubly post-regional and national. He states that "writers will emerge from the region's new transnational populations to write 'the South' again in unexpected and exciting ways" (253). For Bone "to tell about the postsouthern, and to map the postsouthern geographies, is increasingly and necessarily also to take the transnational turn" (253). He concludes that "Only

then can one develop a sufficiently critical, global 'sense of space'" (253). In that sense, Shearer's immigrants and the setting of the text, Madagascar, should not be read as casual insertions to literary texts but rather as a project that spatializes our conceptions of history, knowledge, and cross-cultural and transnational dynamics that re-envision the U.S. South. In other words, the text reminds the readers of the significance of space and territory and exemplifies, as Bone aptly puts it, "geographical redevelopment of the region and related representational shifts in fiction" (ix). In doing so, the text reconsiders the South within the context of the region's social, spatial, and cultural transformations. Thus, the text embodies the idea that, as Scott Romine asserted, "it [is] inevitable that the erosion of economic and ideological distinctiveness will radically alter the meaning of place" (23), which highlights that the history and culture of the nation is intertwined with economic and ideological concerns that change the perception of the space.

The setting in *The Celestial*, Madagascar, as a postsouthern space, has multiple functions and meanings. First, it helps us understand remapping of the southern town with transnational dimensions as "cognitive mapping," to use Fredric Jameson's term, presents a "guided tour through mythical, political, and economic histories" of the South (Brown 738). For Jameson, the concept signifies aesthetic function, and it may assist this paper in interrogating and reconstructing the meaning of space critically (51). For the aesthetic of cognitive mapping, Jameson writes, "an aesthetic of cognitive mapping […] will necessarily have to respect this now enormously complex representational dialectic and invent radically new forms in order to do it justice" (54). Based on the urbanist Kevin Lynch's notion of cognitive mapping from his 1960 book *The Image of the City*, Jameson connects the concept to the crucial Marxist theme of the social totality. Lynch suggests that "the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves" (51). Jameson adds historical dimension to the concept of mapping for the representation of the global total. Thus, cognitive mapping "will reflect the distortions and omissions of the individual's personal experience of living in such an alienated environment" (Roberts 141).

In this context, *The Celestial Jukebox* presents enough data representing historical dimensions and alienated personal experiences that can be analyzed through the lens of cognitive mapping. The following exchange between Angus Chien, Chinese proprietor of the Celestial Grocery, and Aubrey Allerbee, an African American land owner, cognitively remaps the paradigm shift and diversification of a small southern town which "had never been big enough to hire a policeman" (102). This exchange enables us to remap and visualize the changing face of the South not only with commercial districts but also with demographics. With the construction of a station that apparently excesses the

demand is the signifier of servicescapes[2] that would attract other types of businesses and ethnicities to the region. The depiction of the Casino enterprise, which the paper analyzes in detail later, also acts as a cognitive mapping that relates past and present with multiple meanings and functions.

Madagascar becomes a transnational diasporic space and offers the intensity of meanings through its name, particular qualities, and shared memories. In other words, Madagascar, by illuminating important social realities, becomes the phenomenon of an increasingly multicultural space that reconstructs the image of the small southern town. Second, Madagascar, in this sense, becomes a significant territory distinguished from other areas by its name, its past, and by the intensity of meanings people give or drive from it. Last but not least, Madagascar embodies the notion that the significance of a place is in its identity rather than its physicality while the text, at the same time, draws attention to broader practices of racialization, globalization, and transculturalism. Madagascar, as setting, and its immigrants establish both historical and contextual ground and highlight significant characteristics of contemporary southern space. With fictional Madagascar, Shearer creates a place, which offers an alternative reading of the space that can be defined as "multi-Souths," to adapt C. Hugh Holman's phrase (qtd. in Davis 61). In this sense, "the South" is depicted as postsouthern and new in contrast to "old setting" of the rural and "the old theme" of community. Shearer's imagined world and space significantly alter the traditional racial binaries and backwardness of southern spaces while bringing life to the dying southern town and constructing a globally connected space.

The Celestial Jukebox suggests that it would be impossible to envision postmodern southern space without diverse immigrant populations that authenticate Shearer's imagined geography in which the narrative interrogates the nature of locality "as a lived experience in a globalized, deterritorialized world" (Appadurai 56). Shearer introduces various ethnic immigrants with shared historical relations to display the "solidarity with other Global souths" (Hinrichsen 213) while depicting a space that harbors cross-cultural and transnational identities. Immigrants are central to the story of *The Celestial Jukebox*; they work at low paid jobs as construction builders (Mexicans), field workers (Hondurans), and casino workers (Mauritanians). The position of the immigrants also highlights the realities of exploitation that are usually visible. When Boubacar, a Mauritanian teenager, arrives at Memphis International Airport, his uncles cannot come to meet him as they do not want to lose their job by taking a day off. The following excerpt demonstrates the instability of their positions and, therefore, the exploitative nature of immigrant labor:

> There would be no one to meet his plane, to call out his name, *Boubacar.* His uncles would be working at the casino in Mississippi. There was no

[2] Stephen Brown and John F. S Herry Jr in *Time, Space, and the Market: Retroscpaes Rising* (2003) define servicescapes as a "landscape created to serve the economic aims of the service, retail, and tourism industries" and modern-day consumers are "witnessing a renewed interest in place, as the recent rise of dramatic servicescapes" (3)

> time for the luxury of an airport greeting. His uncles might return and find themselves replaced by some other newcomer equally adept at carving carrot-roses, or spiriting baggage off big American buses, or smiling without rancor at old infidel women with no manners. A worker had taken time off for his wife to give birth, so his uncles had said, and found himself replaced that very day by another Mauritanian, someone from his same street back in Nouatchkott. (17, emphasis in original)

This passage highlights that the existence of diverse ethnicities cannot be taken for granted for the community in Madagascar. The visibility of immigrants and the way Boubacar was purchased by a northern philanthropist and the way he traveled to the South locates the novel cognitively, tying the place with history, and offers that postsouthern place reflects cultural, economic, political, and spatial changes. The fact that he is purchased like a commodity cognitively reminds the peculiar institution of slavery in which the black were bought and sold as commodities to perform manual labor in the southern spaces. For that reason, people arrived at this land in any way such as Angus, the Mauritanian Boubacar, and Honduran field workers become the elements of the space more than any local detail. The existence of these characters underscores crucial changes in the diversity of southern identities and affirms historical, social, and political connections of the South with larger souths. By highlighting the diversity and creating a multicultural southern town, Shearer creates a notion of space in which "absolute particularity of the mixture of influences" to borrow John Agnew's phrase, creates specificity rather than mythical representations and insularity (Agnew 22). In so doing, Shearer offers epistemic detours, which depict the U.S. South as a complex transnational space that renders the social reality of her characters in all its complexity. The visibility of immigrant-dominated spaces and their centrality locates the novel in a postsouthern space which signifies the fact that space is not constituted as a singular entity, but rather it is polyvalent and constituted by a "dialectically interwoven matrix" of transnational and transcultural interactions (Wegner 182). Thus, in addition to evoking a particular setting, immigrants, more ethnic diversity will be discussed below, and changing space reveal the complexity of the constructed space.

As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that immigrants not only create a distinct and recognizable southern space, but also offer ways to re-envision and reassessing the South as global south; thus, blurring the real and imaginary borders of the South. The "skinny Mauritanian boy," Boubacar, arrives in a cosmopolitan and globally imagined place, Memphis airport, and finds himself almost lost among the "river of bodies [that] bumped him from behind, eddied around him, whorled off in a long stream" (Shearer 15). The crowd he encounters is reminiscent of the "city-ocean," to use Gaston Bachelard's phrase (Bachelard viii). The *whorled* crowd creates a metaphorical "ocean" of humanity in postsouthern space. The polytonality and multicultural aspects of the postsouthern space are depicted through the phrases "America was a *prism of voices*," and "*sea of cars,*" which highlights diversity implying the foreign as well

as American makers of those cars and labor, local and foreign, produced the cars (Shearer 17, emphasis added).

Upon leaving the airport, Boubacar travels to Madagascar, where his uncles work in the Lucky Leaf Casino. On his way to Madagascar, southern rural space is depicted from Boubacar's perspective as a "flat, wet desert, infinite fields […]an empty parking lot in front of a store […] few human beings in sight" (24-25). In Shearer's imagined postsouthern space, Boubacar's observation mirrors, what Soja writes as, "the essential qualities of the physical world, spatiality, temporality, and social being [that] can be seen as the abstract dimensions which together comprise all facets of human existence" (Soja 25). The symbolic depiction of the southern landscape continues to shape our perceptions as the South is "continually undergoing demographic changes" (Jones and Monteith 11). In other words, through Boubacar's observation, Shearer expands the conceptual framework in which the South has traditionally been mapped. The Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery present a powerful depiction of place as important spaces that shape our understanding of the region. This closer perception and dynamic representation of the space aims to refute Tom Dent and his idea that small towns "are more resistant to change [and] more reflective of the South as a region" (qtd. in Jones and Monteith 7). *The Celestial Jukebox* underscores that the South and, therefore, small towns in the South, will be changed forever by new immigrants and modern capitalist corporations like *Futuristics* and *Dixie Barrel* in Madagascar.

Post-southern Spaces: The Lucky Leaf Casino and The Celestial Grocery

For Lefebvre, the place means "first, the physical- nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the social" (11). In other words, the space is alive in all its aspects, and it communicates in perceived, conceived, and lived aspects. It communicates and, as Lefebvre writes,

> has an affective kernel or center: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or, square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently, it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic. (42)

Representation of physical mental, and social space in *The Celestial Jukebox* is significant because, as perception, conceiving and living experiences, the space cognitively reminds historical, social and cultural values of the community to be accepted or challenged. In other words, *The Celestial* depicts the physical space through the capitalist spatiality created by companies such as *Dixie Barrel* and *Futuristics*. The latter, "[a] Memphis *business* with vague intent"(105), sends letters to the residents of Madagascar wanting to buy their land, including Angus Chien's grocery store and Dean Fondren's, a white land owner, land to turn them into modern-day servicescapes such as casino and gas station(Shearer 85). Similarly, *Dixie Barrel* transforms the spatiality of the southern space adding a

more global sense to space. Aubrey Ellerbee, an African-American farmer whom Dean tries to save from the cogs of the casino, talks to Angus about how capitalist investment reshapes and relocates the sense of place in the southern town. They talk about the change these companies bring in the following exchange:

> *- I reckon you seen where they broke ground for that Dixie Barrel.*
> *- The What?*
> *- Dixie Barrel, up the road a ways. One of them Arkansas chains. Big doings, twelve gas pumps, souvenir shop. They working three shifts of Mexicans to get it open by the end of the month. I'm surprised you can't hear the racket all the way over here. I can hear the backhoes and dozers going all night long.*
> *- Souvenir of what?* Angus asked
> *- They is people in this world that will pay three dollars for one cotton ball wrapped in a little baggie,* Aubrey laughed. […]
> Angus was silent a moment.
> *– Twelve pumps? Ain't nobody around here need twelve tanks of gas all the same time.* (36, emphasis in original)

Contrary to Boubacar's initial depiction of southern land as barren and flat with signs, Aubrey in this dialogue reflects the transformation in a rural town which depicts construction, more job opportunities, and multiplicity of the space. By establishing businesses, the capitalist investment aims to transform the regional to national, or more broadly, to global space through fetishizing the regional themes and attracting more capital to the region. Thus, the individual can create a cosmos to make one's existence intelligible and meaningful.

The Lucky Leaf Casino represents a practical sense of the contemporary restructuring of "capitalist spatiality," to adopt Soja's phrase (159). The field on which the casino was built used to be a plantation house which represents an "absolute space," to borrow from Lefebvre. Lefebvre writes, "the cradle of the absolute place […] is a fragment of agro-pastoral space [which] has the potentiality of being close to nature" (234). From this standpoint, space is a produced place in which use-value is produced, which is also a microcosmic space. As a mental space, the casino mirrors the biracial plantation history of the South located in a predominantly labor-based black state. The Lucky Leaf Casino is reminiscent of historical traumas and depicts, what Taylor calls, "slavery's prescriptive calculations of worth and value" (2).

Although it aims to entertain its customers, the casino is the place "that would break Aubrey" and many others (Shearer 36). Aubrey signs papers to get more money and to gamble more in the casino. The company intends to confiscate his tractor and land in return for his debt. In that sense, the casino becomes a representational space of exploitation and transformation in a postsouthern sense of space. In other words, it underscores the idea that "past itself may return, inflicting new wounds and reopening old ones" (Adams 5). As Lefebvre succinctly puts it, it is this characteristic "that make[s] it similar to fictional/real

space of language, and of that mental space, magically cut off from the spatial realm" (236). Thus, with the Lucky Leaf Casino, Shearer problematizes the nostalgic perpetuation of plantocracy and the myth of the old South by creating a simulacrum. She creates an absolute mental space which frees the space from its singularity and insularity, thereby making it a global space.

The visual and sensual depiction of the interior of the casino, which can be interpreted through Lefebvre's physical and mental space, emphasizes the ideas of space and memory in a modern physical space. This relation is depicted through Dean's perceptions of the casino as a "hypnotic drone, an electronic beckoning, like thousands of dreamy false coins falling, a way of wooing fools" (182). He witnesses modern forms of subjugation that exploits the space and the people occupying that space with "black sharecroppers in overalls feeding coins into slot machines" (182). In addition to the ambiance, the description of the "mindless murals of the old moss-draped *trompe l'oeil* plantations on the walls" aims to relate the space to the past while portraying the relationship between the present and the past. Through the murals, Shearer suggests that "slavery's physical and psychic violence is always active within scenes of nostalgia" (Adams 17). The casino, in this sense, cognitively ties the place to the plantation history of the Old South and the peculiar institution of slavery. The perpetuation of the labor and human abuse is challenged via mapping. In other words, Dean's narrative establishes a better understanding of the interconnection between space, imagination, and literature. Thus, through these interconnections, space in *The Celestial* presents ways to interpret how these interconnections shape our perceptions, memories, and representations of lived and conceived space in the modern South. In other words, through the murals on the walls, Shearer reminds the readers that memories of space are entwined with the present, a part of our current ongoing experience. The murals represent the embodiment of what Lefebvre calls "spatial competence" (33) that communicates cohesion and continuity in the society. The description of the murals reminds us of the concept of "time-space," the chronotope, coined by Mikhail Bakhtin to make a clear sense of the relations between historical time and geographical space in literature.

The interior description of the Lucky Leaf Casino with its physicality, explores, as Bachelord puts, "edges of the imagination, recesses of the psyche, the hallways of the mind," which can be read as mental space ([1958], 1994 vii). "Overseers standing on what once had been all cotton fields" cognitively ties physical space to mental and thus to a social space by addressing different paradigms that shape our understanding of southern spaces in modern times while visualizing the history (Shearer 183). Readers learn more about the casino through Dean's perspective. The destruction that the casino brings to Aubrey, Jimmy–Angus's cousin– and many other nameless characters highlights the social characteristics of space and displays how it creates a social web of relations. For Dean, the casino always "seemed like some vague piece of pornographic cardboard" that attracts people and takes their money and savings away (181). Dean's physical and mental description of the casino reveals the spatial change as follows:

> [The casino] occupied what once had been Israel Abide's main cotton field, which had been so large it had taken six cotton pickers at the time to work it. Now, most of that field was covered in asphalt. Cars and trucks from Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi were wedged as close to the entrance as possible. (181)

Through Dean's perception of space, the text confronts old depictions of the South defined as agrarian, monolithic, and backward while depicting contemporary "capitalist land speculation" that plays a major role in the production of postsouthern space in the fictional Mississippi town, Madagascar (Bone 42). Thus, Shearer's divergence from traditional depiction of the southern space establishes a postsouthern sense of place. Similar to the interior description, the external description of the Lucky Leaf Casino continues to visit the halls of the mind and imagination when Dean notices "a huge fountain […] rippling with water. Concrete cherubs cavorted, while concrete angels with the bodies of whores watched over them. Then he saw cotton pickers and combines, arranged in a circle around the fountain" (186). The fountain, similar to the murals inside the casino, serves to the same purpose and depicts the land's connection to labor and exploitation. These depictions highlight capitalism's "tremendous impact upon the material production of place," which is radically reconstructed and ultimately portrays "the sociospatial reality of the post-South" (Bone 46). Similarly, in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and Postmodern Perspective*, Antonio Benitez-Rojo defines the 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.

At crucial moments in the text, Shearer challenges exceptionality and notions of racial binarism in the U.S. South through the space that the Celestial Grocery occupies, a locale that imbues the text with connections of which immigrants are an integral part. The Chinese grocery "invites a cross-temporal, transcultural collaboration and dialogue" (Hinrichsen 169), which would create a hybrid and multicultural U.S. South. Through her diverse immigrant groups and customers who meet in the Celestial Grocery, Shearer succeeds in opening up the US southern town through dialogic encounters with the global south via the help of these diverse characters whose initial dislocation from traditional referents leads to a reconsideration of "southern paradigms in southern places" (Hinrichsen 198). We learn much about Madagascar through Angus's perspective, knowledge, and memory. Angus presents an unbiased perspective. The Celestial Grocery, which is one of the rare places that races are mused, plays a central role signifying the function of post-southern place. As the "deer-antler chandelier […] dominated the center" of the Celestial Grocery, Angus as a character and the Celestial Grocery as a place dominate the center of the setting with "little yellow lights" (99) it radiates, which help the residents of Madagascar to "[locate] themselves in the vast black nights"(97). Angus and the Celestial

Grocery, as a physical, mental, and social space, present ways of seeing, knowing, and understanding the contemporary South.

In addition to hosting customers with distinct ethnicities and cultures, the Celestial Grocery, as a social space, also represents history and cultural values that are unique to the South as the Grocery "was the last of a constellation of Chinese-run country stores that used to exist in almost every river town between Memphis and Mississippi" (31). With the old jukebox, the Grocery carries the tinges and sounds and culture of the past to the present. Boubacar is introduced to southern music through the jukebox and could listen to "Johnny Cash, Otis Redding, Carl Perkins, Percy Sledge, Slim Harpo, [and] Wilson Pickett" (33). With this functionality, the Celestial Grocery was not "just a subsistence-level business," but more a socioeconomic and cultural space where we can witness the history of the town as well for any literary representation is a "*reinterpretation* of the contemporary historical reality" (Mete 217, emphasis in original). The following description of the Celestial Grocery as the hub or center of the town portrays global connections of a place through business. There is something for everybody in this small multicultural southern grocery:

> The Celestial Grocery was the acknowledged heart of the little dying town, the kind of place to get live fish bait at five in the morning or eggs over easy near midnight if you could catch Angus still up. Inside, plaid flannel t-shirts from Taiwan were shelved next to sardines from Finland and pantyhose from North Carolina. Cheap cotton-candy textured dresses from the Philippines hung on a rusty rack alongside camouflage t-shirts from Alabama meant for deer hunters. (32-33)

In addition to the economic aspects, the Celestial Grocery occupies a significant space in the memory of the town as a "living organism," to use Lefebvre's words, which is a characteristic of mental space. The Celestial Grocery as a physical space is an active place in which experiences are recreated through mental abstractions. In this sense, the grocery becomes one of the main characters of the story. The text presents a mental and historical role of the place in the following manner:

> Angus recorded the history of Madagascar on those walls, the wedding and birth announcements, obits, and local engagements. As the years passed, the walls were covered with accounts of riverboat wrecks and local sons lost in the wars, those declared and those that weren't. […] Aubrey's had been only the second black face to be tacked up on the Celestial's wall. […] The clipping was put up there by Angus in 1973 when Aubrey was fifteen. He was the first black boy in Future Farmers of America in Mississippi to win Grand Reserve championship at the fair in Memphis. (37-38)

The grocery is depicted as a dynamic physical space, which is at the same time conceptual and imagined. The identity of the place adds materiality to its physicality and, therefore, to its visibility. It is the phenomenon of an increasingly multicultural postsouthern space. The discourse on the place is

representational as it bears witness to the historical events that are recorded and displayed on the walls of the Celestial Grocery. In a dialogical relationship with the spatiality, the text portrays spatial practices of the community because the Grocery depicts that spatial practice is the result of practices dominated and affected by everydayness. Thus, the Celestial Grocery is a conceptualized space that delineates what is lived and what is perceived within the physical existence of the space. The recordings, pictures, and notes on the walls exemplify ideologies and potentials of repression. In other words, they represent, as Lefebvre puts succinctly, "imposed relations between production, signs, codes, and frontal relations" (33). Furthermore, with Aubrey's photo taped on the wall, space portrays the complex race relations in the South. As a representational space, Grocery embodies "complex symbolism, sometimes coded, sometimes not" (33). The pictures show how relations are grasped by historical accumulations, what Lefebvre defines as "history of space" (42). In other words, the Celestial Grocery and, similarly, the Lucky Leaf Casino, display how physical spaces are built within a complex dialectic relationship with societies that inhabit them.

Conclusion

The Celestial Jukebox, through social and historical characteristics of the space, highlights the significance of postsouthern space and multicultural social relations in contemporary literature. Through the Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery, postsouthern space becomes a site of ethnography, anthropology, and history that would narrate the story of space while reconstructing and re-envisioning functionality and role of the space in Twenty-first Century American literature. In order to present functionality, Lefebvre's modes of physical, mental, and social spaces enable the reader to better analyze the role of space as perceived, conceived and lived experience. Choosing Madagascar as a setting and context for immigrants and changing space, Shearer enlarges our understanding of the postsouthern space and the relations that shape that space. To do so, her choice of specific and significant spaces such as the Lucky Leaf Casino and the Celestial Grocery accentuate the significance of space in relation to lived experiences, culture and history. Her choice and presentation complicate and challenge the persistence of historical, political and cultural paradigms that shaped the space which undergoes significant shift due to shifting demographics and economics. The text thus presents multidimensionality of a lived space. In other words, Shearer, through her depictions, suggests that space as a physical and socially constructed entity cannot be reduced to only one basic form. The text offers alternative representations of a space while depicting the ways in which place and memory, along with many others, reconstruct and re-envisions the space in the South. Most importantly, in depicting the postsouthern space, the text amalgamates different cultures and ethnicities and reminds the reader of the main principles upon which the country has been founded. Different cultures and demographics

save the region from its insularity bringing it diversity, multiculturalism and richness that is seen through international corporations that revived the region's economy which ultimately saved the region from being backward. In that sense, it is possible to say that *The Celestial Jukebox* depicts post-southern space as a complex and multiethnic social product. By challenging plantation nostalgia, human commodification, and exploitation, the novel contributes to the subversion of economic and historical abuses of immigrants, labor, and land in the contemporary US South. Shearer's text addresses many different cultural and historical aspects of the South. In that sense, there are significant areas of further research that can be conducted on immigration labor, globalization, music, and foodways.

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