



## Martin Amis’s “State of England” within the Lefebvrian Socio-Spatial Context

Lefebvre’nin Sosyo-Mekânsal Bağlamında Martin Amis’in “İngiltere’nin Durumu”  
Adlı Öyküsü

Nilay ERDEM AYYILDIZ\*

### Abstract

Shedding light on the complicated relationship between space and the human being who goes beyond the physical boundaries of space, Henri Lefebvre made a breakthrough with his critical approach to the urban question through his concept of the “triad of space”, including “perceived space”, referring to the physically perceptible dimension of space; “conceived space”, where the dominant ideologies are operated; and “lived space”, which is peculiar to every inhabitant on the basis of their background. He argued that space is in an incessant process of production, estranging inhabitants in their lived spaces in multicultural and capitalist countries. He posited that “fetishistic concrete abstractions” provide them with romantic domination to cover their alienation and involve them in social relationships in perceived space. England and the protagonist, Big Mal, in Martin Amis’s “State of England” (1998) stand as exemplars for the aforementioned issue. The postmodernist author fictionalizes a lower-class English man’s everyday life in the late twentieth-century England through Mal. It is set in a school garden on a sports day; however, it also portrays Mal’s lived spaces at home, the car park of a bar and even Burger King. In the present study, a Lefebvrian socio-spatial inquiry is employed for scrutinizing England’s urban identity in Amis’s story under question, within the context of capitalism. In this regard, the study indicates that England, undergoing various transformations in the 1990s, is a space of hegemony. In each part of this urban space, Mal oscillates between perceived and conceived spaces and becomes involved in the grindstone of lived space by means of some fetishistic concrete abstractions albeit his alienation. Ultimately, the study concludes that England as a whole is a politicized space which stretches throughout space-time and is always in the process of production by capitalist ideology, influencing everyday lives, especially of lower-class people and the next generation.

**Keywords:** Henri Lefebvre, socio-spatial theory, multicultural capitalist England, triad of space, fetishistic concrete abstraction.

### Öz

Mekân ve mekânın fiziksel sınırlarını aşan insan arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiye ışık tutan Henri Lefebvre, mekânın fiziksel olarak algılanabilen boyutuna karşılık gelen “algılanan mekân”, baskın ideolojilerin kendini gösterdiği “tasarlanan mekân” ve geçmişlerine dayanarak herkesin kendine özgün “yaşanan mekânı” kapsayan “mekân üçlüsü” kavramıyla kent sorununa ilişkin eleştirel yaklaşımıyla çığır açmıştır. Lefebvre, mekânın; çok kültürlü ve kapitalist ülkelerde, halkı yaşanan mekânlarında yabancılaştıran kesintisiz bir üretim sürecinde olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. Ayrıca

\* Dr. Instructor, Firat University, School of Foreign Languages, e-mail: nerdem@firat.edu.tr, ORCID:0000-0002-1779-8464

fetiş somut soyutlamaların ise halkın yabancılaşmalarını örtbas edip onları algılanan mekândaki sosyal ilişkilere dâhil etmek için onlara romantik hâkimiyet sağladığını iddia etmiştir. Martin Amis'in "İngiltere'nin Durumu" (1998) adlı öyküsündeki İngiltere ve başkarakter Big Mal bahsedilen bu duruma örnek oluşturmaktadır. Postmodernist yazar; Mal karakteriyle, yirminci yüzyıldaki alt sınıf bir İngiliz'in günlük yaşamını kurgulamaktadır. Öykü, bir okul bahçesinde spor organizasyonu yapılan bir günde geçer, fakat Mal'ın evi, bir barın otoparkı, hatta Burger King'de 'yaşanan mekanlar'ını da resmetmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Amis'in öyküsündeki İngiltere'nin kentsel kimliğini kapitalizm bağlamında incelemek için Lefebvre'nin sosyo-mekânsal araştırması kullanılmaktadır. Bu bakımdan, çalışma; 1990'larda çeşitli değişimler geçiren İngiltere'nin bir hegemonya mekânı olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu kentsel mekânın her bir kısmında, Mal, algılanan ve tasarlanan mekânlar arasında bocalar ve yabancılaşmasına rağmen, fetiş somut soyutlamalarla yaşanan mekânın çarkına katılır. Son olarak, çalışma; İngiltere'nin mekân-zaman boyunca uzandığı ve özellikle alt sınıf ve gelecek neslin günlük hayatını etkileyen kapitalist ideolojiyle daima üretim sürecinde olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Henri Lefebvre, sosyo-mekânsal kuram, çok kültürlü kapitalist İngiltere, mekân üçlüsü, fetiş somut soyutlama.

## Introduction

French Neo-Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) was one of the prominent philosophers who broke the silence in the 1960s after Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels's (1820–1895) limited researches into the relationship between politics and the issue of the urban city as space when he provided a new dimension to the socio-spatial concept within critical theories such as Marxism. Later, Lefebvre's dialectical approach to the urban question inspired a number of theorists including David Harvey (1935), Edward Soja (1940–2015), and Manuel Castells (1942), who paid homage to Lefebvre and built their own approaches around Lefebvorean theory. In this regard, Lefebvre has retained his enduring impact on socio-spatial theory through his critical approach to the relations between time, space, social relations, capitalism, urbanism and politics for more than five decades.

Lefebvre calls into question the notion that space is "a given truth" (1996, p. 153) for people or a container where the society lives, and he posits that it is "a social product" (1991, p. 26) which always both shapes and is shaped by the politics, economy and all kinds of ideology independently of the conception of linear time. Consideration of a 'producible' space urges the notion that the urban, then, may always be analyzed, theorized and criticized through everyday life, state, and political action, because the dialectical relation between the body and the space has led to an incessant transformation in the urban since, in Lefebvre's terms, "the urban revolution" started with industrialism but then superseded it by leading societies to "a competitive capitalism (1976, p. 10). In this context, the urban ceases to be only an "object" and becomes a social space, undergoing an endless three-dimensional process including material, ideological and imaginary ones in modern societies. To put it another way, the urban identity is both a product and a process as it is always in transformation due to the ever-transforming body-space-time relations in material, ideological and imaginary senses through the dominant ideology of the dominant class in every society. Accordingly, in Lefebvre's words, "there is a politics of space because space is political" (2009b, p. 174); thus, it cannot be considered independently of politics. Interpreting the Lefebvorean conception of space, Koçsoy notes that the production of social space and "its performative capacity are through ideology, power and politics over the space, for every ideology has its own space" (2018, p. 102) and underlines the politicized nature, inherent in spaces.

It is worth noting that the incessant transformation of the space is under the control of the global capitalist economy and urbanization. According to Lefebvre, urbanization is socio-spatial dimension of capitalist relations through globalization, thus contradictory in its nature because globalization takes its force from homogenization to create "a global identity" in the society, whereas urbanization originates from heterogeneity resulting from diverse classes forming the society and aspires to keep this diversity alive to retain capitalism in a social space (1991: p. 386). Therefore, it may be claimed that for Lefebvre, urbanism, capitalism, and globalism are the driving ideologies through which the bourgeoisie ruling class, in Lefebvre's term, "colonizes" everyday lives of people from different classes and ethnicities in socio-spatial cities. Thus, "the whole history of life has been characterised by" space (1991, p. 176). Therefore, space may be

considered to be a battleground where the dominant class struggles to perpetuate its ideologies in all heretofore societies.

Lefebvre also contributed to the socio-spatial theory with his concept of the “triad of space” through which he defines a single space with three separate dimensions, termed as “perceived/spatial practice”, “conceived/representations of space” and “lived/representational space”. In this Lefebvrian trilogy, perceived space refers to material and perceivable space where human beings live and act physically. In addition, space is always a lived space whose multiple inhabitants occupy themselves with distinct ethnical and cultural values and activities. However, it is in the conceived one that politics exerts its power. In Foucauldian thinking, the ruling class uses space as a “machine of repression” (1982, p. 788) to perpetuate its power, and Lefebvre argues that the dominant class plans this in conceived space to actualize in perceived space. Thus, conceived space affects lived space as well as perceived space, which are subject to various manipulations and transformations (Schmid, 2006, pp. 169–170). They turn abstract spaces into a concrete social space where dominant ideologies exert. Kipfer articulates the dialectical relations between these spatial concepts as follows: “The production of space is a hegemonic process, since in urban space, lived space becomes intertwined with conceived and perceived spaces: the repetitive, homogenous, patriarchal, and alienating space becomes an integral part of the everyday, thus violently incorporating daily aspirations, desires, and dreams into urbanism” (2008, p. 200). More precisely, the urbanist ideology, inherent in conceived space, leads urbanization to control lived space through perceived space, thus the capitalist state economy penetrates the society in the urbanized everyday life of all classes. In light of the Lefebvrian trilogy, it becomes clear that perceived space emerges as a concrete abstraction from conceived space, which is an abstract space constructed by the ruling power, and it has an insidious force upon inhabitants’ lived space through social praxis with other people in a common urban space. In this context, it may be claimed that lived space in the Lefebvrian trilogy is born in between perceived and conceived spaces where inhabitants of the city inscribe their own symbolic meaning to space in their daily lives.

All these spaces form a unit which Lefebvre calls “centrality”, producing and reproducing the energy from physical and mental things, inherent in a space at the same time, but invisible to the society (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 331–332). In this context, Lefebvre notes that the human body produces and reproduces itself as an internal space and has a reciprocal relationship with the external space, which is also a product of the human body, and adds that this dialectical interaction is contradictory in itself (1991, p. 374). Accordingly, conceived space results in conflicts in perceived space as the ruling power which aims to homogenize people of different ethnicities and classes to form a unity within the society through urbanism leads to discrimination among people, for example in gender and class terms. Therefore, as Lefebvre asserts, “urbanization is not only homogenizing difference, but is also self-destructive” (1991, p. 78) because, in Merrifield’s words, “[t]he more the city grows, develops, extends itself, and spreads its tentacles everywhere, the more social relations get degraded and the more sociability is torn apart at the seams” (2011, p. 473). To put it another way, conceived space presupposes people to live in harmony regardless of their genders, classes, and ethnicities to form a unity in the urban which is, indeed, a space of hegemony. However, perceived space reinforces the division and hierarchy among people to perpetuate capitalism and the dominant ideologies. Thus, the ruled class oscillates between materiality and immateriality within the fusion of conceived and perceived dimensions of space when it realizes that the ‘conceived’ homogeneity of space is no more than an illusion in reality. In this context, even bodies become spaces where mental space coexists with external space in a struggle against dualities which is born out of dialectical relations among conceived, perceived and lived spaces (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 175). This inner struggle paves the way for individual alienation in society. According to Olwig, “alienation” is “transferral”, hence, loss of rights in the land where one feels belonging as space which makes him “one” in the society. Thus, every loss, which tarnishes one’s rights, leads to psychological alienation which literally means to be made foreign; thus, one becomes estranged from the space in which one feels belonging until then (2005, p. 20).

In Lefebvrian thinking, alienation culminates “in estrangement suffusing everyday life” in the fetishistic form in capitalist societies (2008, p. 167). Lefebvre argues that fetishism indicates “the economic, everyday basis of the philosophical theories of mystification and alienation” (2008, p. 179) as he proposes that social praxis take abstract form in capitalist societies; thus, “social objects become things, fetishes,

which turn upon him [the human being]" (2008, p. 71). These social forms are concrete but abstract at the same time, since they come into being as a result of interaction with human individuals and groups (Lefebvre, 2009a, p. 76). Abstraction in social life materializes through fetishistic concrete things. This abstraction starts in the social praxis, not in the mind, and it has a concrete power in practice, providing people with "romantic domination" in social relations. Accordingly, the fetishized form of these concrete abstractions including money and commodity, results in the dissimulation of real relationships by the dominating society. Put differently, fetishistic concrete abstractions supply an appearance which becomes concrete since people assume that "these 'fetishes' exist outside of themselves they really do function like objective things" (Lefebvre, 2008, p. 178). Accordingly, alienated people have romantic domination through fetishistic concrete abstractions in everyday life and make up for the division among people of separate classes, genders, and ethnicities in capitalist societies. In this context, fetishistic concrete abstractions may be taken as masks for the alienated marginalized groups to create an illusionary appearance to cover the reality in social praxis. Thus, they help the multicultural capitalist society appear dis-alienated through praxis in perceived space. This is how all inhabitants produce space while it generates their everyday lives, and space is in the progress of reproduction all the time. Amis's "State of England" (1998), which is to be analyzed in the study, fictionalizes how an alienated lower-class English man keeps being involved in socialized production in socio-spatial terms through fetishistic concrete abstractions in multicultural capitalist England in the 1990s. The story has escaped from critics' attention since its release, therefore there are hardly any secondary sources about it. This situation both limits the study and leads to its originality with the analysis below.

### **"State of England" from a Lefebvorean Socio-Spatial Perspective**

The expression that "the running track was a running track but this was *the country*..." (63) in "State of England" by Martin Amis (1949–), the son of Kingsley Amis (1922–1995), indeed, reveals that the postmodern author presents a mirror image of competitive, capitalist and multicultural England in the 1990s through a lower-class English man's everyday life. The plot revolves around a forty-year-old man, Big Mal, who attends the dad's race with other dads most of whom are immigrants and hence of different ethnicities. The third-person narrative of the story of the sports day moves forward in a logical progression in Mal's mind but leads to many relatively confusing flashbacks. Thus, although the story is set in a school garden from the beginning till the end, the content presents the protagonist in a number of urban spaces in his daily life through flashbacks. In other words, the mental space of the protagonist takes the reader to different socio-spatial areas in Mal's mind independently of his body in the school garden. The author also presents his postmodernist approach by overthrowing the classical notion of short story and divides his work into separate parts entitled "Mobile Phones", "Asian Babes", "Mortal Kombat", "Burger King", "Rhyming Slang", "Motor Show" and "Sad Sprinter". Thus, although the work is included as a part of a short story collection, published as *Heavy Water and Other Stories*, "State of England", at thirty-four pages with different episodes under separate subtitles, confuses the reader with its style. Each subtitle in the story reveals different aspects of urbanized English society from Mal's point of view. To be clear, each episode opens up to a unique lived space for the protagonist through a relationship between the body and space. Spaces in the episodes carry socio-historical traces of the country, which reflect Mal's life.

Chiswick and Hatton note that following the Second World War (1939–1945), intercontinental migration resumed in a pattern similar to that before the First World War (1914–1918). It could be the result of the fact that the post-WWII period witnessed a dramatic decline in the costs of travel, information, and communication which also lowered the cost of international migration as a result of the shift from sea to air travel, as well as changes in immigration policies in the 1960s with a shift away from quotas that favoured immigrants from northwest Europe (2003, p. 74). Mal is also said to have migrated to Los Angeles to work as a bouncer. Although he likes the city, he finds he cannot make it there on his own. It is clear that he did not feel himself at home in Los Angeles; similarly, he is alienated in his hometown surrounded by many immigrants because England was also one of the multicultural spaces that welcomed many people from all over the world. When he looks at the running track over the fence in the school garden, he feels dizzy with

“culture shock” (Amis, 1998, p. 63). Just like England which was home to many immigrants from all over the world, the track is also full of many foreign families such as “the Nusrats, the Fardouses, the Paratoshes” (Amis, 1998, p. 43).

The transition from economic liberalism to social liberalism in governmental policy also led to substantial changes in England because of which the protagonist oscillates between the England of the 1950s, where he has grown up, and the 1990s' England. As a shopkeeper's daughter, Margaret Thatcher, called “‘Hurricane’ Thatcher [,] seemingly blew class off the face of British society” during her rule as prime minister for eleven years until 1990 (Storry and Childs, 2002, p. 178). The conceived space was a classless English country. She was followed by John Major with his Conservative party addressing middle-class and business voters. Then Tony Blair took over the government with his Labour Party, which was a center-left party, concerned with workers' rights and commitment to social welfare programs. Notwithstanding the governmental changes in the late 1990s, England, as a conceived space, remained in theory a country where people were supposedly equal, regardless of their classes, ages, races or gender. Indeed, capitalistic ends were prioritized in perceived space, and social relations were shaped in accordance with materialism in lived space. More concretely, Mal's lower-class follows his mental space, whichever physical space he exists in. He is mostly jobless, working as a bouncer at a bar and sometimes thieving, thus, often getting involved in some fights. The narrator introduces the character with the wound on his face, which is from a fight in which he and his friend, Fat Lol, have been involved in a car park on the night before. He seeks to conceal this “shocking laceration on the side of his face, earlobe to the cheekbone” (Amis, 1998, p. 38). The narrator states: “Last night's spanking was by no means the worst he'd ever taken” (Amis, 1998, p. 39). It may be inferred that he has been beaten several times before, too. Thus, the wound on his face may be taken as a sign of his lower-class roots because of which he has many troubles in his life. It also represents degradation in his life because of his class. The consumer society refers to the unequal distribution of wealth, which, as Rosen claims: “may help to account for the rise in crimes against property, but affluence is less likely to account for the rise in crimes of violence, which more than quadrupled between 1960 and 2000” (2003, p. 33). More concretely, Mal's being beaten by some rich opera-goers, while clamping their Range Rover in a car park, indicates violence stemming from the gap between classes. As a setting for the clashes between working and upper classes, and violence, the car park represents the contradiction between perceived and conceived space. It is a proof that the perceived space, which is used to park cars, indicates class-based conflicts and violence in opposition to the conceived space, which is supposedly used by all people regardless of their economic conditions.

The bar and the happenings there also exemplify the contradiction between conceived and perceived spaces, leading people to alienation. Mal is beaten by a working-class man at the entrance of the bar where Mal works as doorkeeper, as he does not allow non-members to enter the bar. The bar, which is built for people to entertain themselves, turns out to be a setting of class struggle. Although both are from the working class, the man's situation exemplifies Rosen's point about the relationship between affluence and crime rates. The man's hatred and self-inadequacy results from his class, as reflected in his words. When Mal does not take him in, he says: “It's as I'm a working man like... So you don't like my kind. Am I hearing you saying I'm not good enough?” (Amis, 1998, p. 53). Said notes that the dominance of one group over another is reinforced, and differences become stabilized through socio-economic differences. Thus, those who meet some disadvantages derived from their class feel they are being “othered” (2003, p. 173). It may be inferred that the car park and the bar are utilized to reinforce the differences between the rich and the poor. More concretely, when the working-class man's reaction to Mal is considered from the Lefebvrian approach, the bar may be evaluated as a space of hegemony in lived space in contrast to a place of entertainment for all people as a perceived space because it reproduces the social relations within a contradiction between the upper classes and the lower classes. Accordingly, the situations in the bar and the car park reveal how the state perpetuates hierarchy, thus classism and capitalism, through abstract spaces.

Throughout the story, the state of England is illustrated through the school where Mal's son, Jet, is educated. It is a perceived space of racial equality for children and parents from different countries and ethnicities including Japanese and Pakistani. However, it is noteworthy that most of the dads are upwardly mobile immigrants and have economic incentives. Hence, Mal thinks that “[n]ow that prejudice was gone

everyone could relax and concentrate on money” (Amis, 1998, p. 60). Indeed, as Althusser discusses, state school is one of the most influential ideological state apparatuses after the family where children are produced in accordance with the dominant ideologies of the state (2006, p. 88), so schools are influential conceived spaces serving the ends of the dominant class. In this context, Jet’s school represents a miniature England which is dominated by multicultural and capitalist ideologies. Although the state uses social spaces, such as the school or the family, to impose and reproduce its ideologies, the human body generates its own perceived space by filtering the conceived space. The school includes competition in its nature even though it homogenizes people of different ages and ethnicities. Mal thinks: “School is an exam and a competition and a popularity contest: it’s racing demon. And you saw how the kids were equipped for it by nature...” (Amis, 1998, p. 56). While observing the dads on the track, he notices the competitive character of the society in which nobody is, in fact, equal, but in a competition to become better:

Bern, Nusrat, Fardous, Someth, Adrian, Mikio, Paratosh and the rest of them, no great differences in age but all at various stages along the track, waistlines, hairlines, worldliness, with various c.v.s of separation, contentment, estrangement... This was the dad’s race. But dads are always racing, against each other, against themselves. That’s what dads do. (Amis, 1998, p. 70)

Accordingly, in the story, the running track in the school garden, as a perceived space, seems to be a place which is used to organize a school activity to entertain schoolchildren and dads. Indeed, it functions more as a perceived space than it does as a conceived space because it represents the urbanized country as the competitive world of young people and dads running for themselves and their children. The whole society, indeed, leads its lives in a competitive capitalized space; thus, people are in a marathon though they are unaware, or they behave as if they were so. Thus, the space itself has a contradictory nature, which leads its inhabitants to questioning and alienation. For instance, while perceiving the school garden as the state’s conceived space, Mal observes how the realistic portrayal of England through the dads in the school garden contrasts with the right-thinkers’ claim. He points out the fact that “[s]ome of them [dads in the school garden] had no new clothes. Some were still dressed in the uniform of their deficiencies. Some were still wearing the same old shit” (Amis, 1998, p. 54). He criticizes the Conservative party by claiming: “So class and race and gender were supposedly gone... Right-thinkers everywhere were claiming that they were clean of prejudice, that in them the inherited formulations had at last been purged” (Amis, 1998, pp. 53–54). Mal observes the dads’ clothes and sees: “[b]lazers, Shell suits, jeans and open shirts, even the odd dhoti or kaftan or whatever you like to call them. The dads: half of them weren’t even English – thus falling at the first huddle, socially” (Amis, 1998, p. 42). The multicultural English society is inhabited by many people, who are of different backgrounds and ethnicities, but wear and act as the English do. The narrator states from Mal’s perspective: “Socially, these days, even the Pak could put the wind up him. Paratosh, for instance, who was some kind of Sikh or Pathan and wore a cravat and acted in radio plays and had beautiful manners” (Amis, 1998, pp. 42–43). In this context, the school garden representing the current multicultural nature of the English society brings people from a variety of ethnic communities tracing their own cultural codes even though all the fathers occupy the same conceived space, which is considered to be global and integrated. Mal feels lost in the garden, which accommodates a multiplicity of coexisting differences instead of the once homogenous and static urban space of England. Non-English people were everywhere. Jet’s school is merely a miniature England. Not only at school, even in electronic miscegenation, “[w]hite men and dark women were coming together” (Amis, 1998, p. 46). He regards England as “like a racial rainbow, ready to encompass a new World” (Amis, 1998, p. 47), which is, as noted by Rich, “multicultural, without boundaries; it is much-heralded Global Village” (1999, p. 2).

Big Mal is overwhelmed by, in Lefebvre’s words, the “continuous development [that...] punctuated by leaps by sudden mutations and upheavals in England over [four] decades” (2009b, p. 32). As an English citizen, he is estranged from the space he has acquainted himself with since his childhood. As an English citizen, Mal feels lost in the global space. He feels degraded in all terms. To illustrate, he thinks that even immigrants speak better than himself (Amis, 1998, p. 43). Therefore, the narrator states: “He spoke bad, too – he knew it” (Amis, 1998, p. 41). His lack of self-confidence alienates him from the society to such an extent that he brings the dialectical relation between his perceived space to the lived one to a halt because he feels disturbed even in the school garden among the peer group of dads. As he compares himself to the other dads

around him, the lived space of the school garden reflects his failure in his citizenship, job, marriage, and fatherhood, which encompass his life.

The defects in his life render Mal fearful in his lived space and alienate him in perceived space. He ran away from home five months earlier and began living with an Indian woman called Linzi by abandoning his wife, Sheilagh, and his son, Jet. He thinks his situation is a common one. Even Bern, "the dad that Mal knew best" (Amis, 1998, p. 44), has left home when his wife is pregnant, and what is more, "[n]ot for this Toshiko [the woman, whom he introduces to Mal before the race], who was presumably Japanese, but for somebody else" (Amis, 1998, p. 45). What makes this situation common in Mal's lived space is the transformation in the multicultural conceived space of England. As Clarke and Henwood claim, in the 1990s, family fragmentation was common among young women, especially quadragenarians (1997, p. 72), like Sheilagh and Bern's ex-wife in the story, both of whom are left for an immigrant woman. Obviously, multiculturalism in England, with an increasing number of immigrants from various countries, led to social upheaval in English everyday life. Family structure was influenced by it most, and the widespread cohabitation stands out as an indicator of this situation. It was so common that, as Irwin states, "over 30% of births in the UK occurred outside married partnership – a rate well above European mean and increasing at a faster rate" in the 1990s (2000, p. 4). This fact is represented by Mal's relationship both with his ex-wife Sheilagh and his cohabiting partner Linzi in the story. Jet is nine years old, which indicates that Mal and Sheilagh lived together and had a child before marriage. Such a disordering in the marital relationship also led to deep "changes in people's behaviour and attitudes towards sexual morality and living arrangements" (McRae, 1999, p. 16). More concretely, the changes in his sexual life outside his marriage make him dependent on 'Asian Babies', a pornographic film he keeps watching with Linzi. Therefore, the pornographic film is a concrete abstraction for his sexual alienation.

Another fetishistic concrete abstraction, keeping Mal bound up with the social relationships in perceived space is Linzi. Indeed, despite leaving his wife and son for her, Mal does not look happy with his "new Indian partner" (Amis, 1998, p. 43), whom he does not idealize at all. As a response to his friend Bern asking Linzi's age, he wants to utter "sixteen" as she functions as a fetishistic concrete abstraction in his social relations among his friends. However, he knows that she is "[f]orty-ish" (Amis, 1998, p. 47), that is, older than Sheilagh. He describes her nail polish as "the same vampiric crimson she often used" (Amis, 1998, p. 42). To make up for his alienation, even when he is with Linzi watching television and reading newspaper, which are also "treated as equivalent types of alienated domination" (O'Kane, 2017, p. 2), he watches the video, which "Linzi had procured from Kosmetique. Breast enhancement: Before and After. You could tell that plastic surgery sought to reverse natural prescript, because After was always better than Before, instead of a poor second, as in life" (Amis, 1998, p. 46). Thus, the pornographic films and breast enhancement advisements attach him to Linzi in the lived space of home because Linzi is a fetishistic concrete abstraction for him, and everything natural including the female body, is materialized and reconstructed with consumerist ends by being transformed into 'lived concrete abstractions' which have exchange value in fetishized abstract space.

Indeed, not only Linzi's nail polish but her accent also has an irritating effect on Mal. The narrator says: "She [Linzi] spoke worse than Sheilagh, worse than Mal" (Amis, 1998, p. 43). Apparently, once-degraded and discriminated Indian women were included by globalized and urbanized England in its conceived dimension. Nevertheless, Linzi remains 'the other' and an object for Mal in lived space. She functions merely as one of the fetishistic concrete abstractions, of which he has made use to compensate for the gaps he feels in lived space and to create romantic domination for relief in perceived space. Thus, she is an abstraction with which he aims at concealing his failure in his marriage. Despite his love of Sheilagh, Mal's relationship with Linzi is a result of the fact that as told in the story: "This thing, he thought, this whole thing happened because he wanted a change... and England wasn't going to give him one" (Amis, 1998, p. 47). In fact, he realizes that a lot of things have changed since his boyhood in the 1950s. Just like his own face, life, and all the things around himself, the state of England has also changed. The only matter is that he has had difficulty in adapting to the rapid changes since he was born till that day. Multicultural and global England as conceived space has brought many changes in lived spaces, thus he cannot become accustomed to the new facet of England and feels alienated from the prevailing materialism around him. Hence, he sustains his life in perceived space through fetishistic concrete abstractions such as pornographic films, Linzi, dressing, and mobile phone in romantic domination by compensating the immateriality which has gone with materiality.

All the protagonist's comparisons in lived space are based on materialism, which gains importance in the conceived dimension of the urban space. For instance, he feels confident when he thinks that he wears a "Shell suit" and "dark glasses", thus "a modern person" and has a son with "a modern name: Jet", and he "could call his Asian babe [Linzi] on his mobile phone" in comparison to his childhood friend and work partner called "Fat Lol in his Sloppy Loe, his sloppy jeans, and his son flinching when either parent made a move for vinegar or the Brown sauce" (Amis, 1998, p. 61). Lol is the only person around him by whom he does not feel degraded. Considering Lol's shabby clothes, and even his son's outdated name makes him feel relieved a little bit beside him. Thus, it is obvious that clothing, a mobile phone and even a modern or out-of-date name are thought to indicate the social status of people. In Lefebvrian thinking, Mal's situation reveals how urban citizens inhabit a capitalist space on the basis of mutual recognition of difference and fetishistic concrete abstractions (1996, p. 158).

The mobile phone is another fetishistic concrete abstraction for Mal, which he uses to catch up with the power he feels a lack of in lived, perceived and conceived spaces of the school. Mobile phones "became the present of choice in the 1990s, when they were the country's fastest-selling consumer good of the century" (Black, 2004, p. 32). Regardless of their class, all people used it as it was a common means of social mobility. People had social domination with a mobile phone even without speaking a word, because as Lefebvre notes, there is "a language of commodity" as a concrete abstraction which "acts as the power of determinate 'beings' (human groups, fractions of classes)" (1996, p. 341). More concretely, for Mal, "[w]ith a mobile riding on your jaw you could enter the arena enclosed in your own concerns, your own preoccupation, your own business" (Amis, 1998, p. 42). By means of his mobile, he can keep in touch with Sheilagh, Linzi, and Fat Lol in everyday life. Among the other dads in the school garden, he benefits from his mobile phone as a fetishistic concrete abstraction. He often tries to appear to be talking on the phone, not only to gain prestige upon the other men but also to hide the wound on his face, which is also an indication of his lower-class position. Mal communicates with his ex-wife best through "the mobile phone, which seems to promise progress and freedom of movement" for their broken relationship (Smyth, 2000, p. 155). They have a lack of communication and do not talk "except on their mobile phones" (Amis, 1998, p. 38). Thus, his mobile phone creates romantic domination for him in his lived space by providing him with the flexibility of sometimes being an ex-husband talking to his ex-wife about their son's problems, sometimes being a flirtatious man talking to his new sexual partner, and sometimes a businessman talking to his partner about a new way of making money such as clamping cars in the car park.

Spaces, money and fetishistic concrete abstractions are in a reciprocal relationship with the inhabitants of the capitalist urban countries. Some spaces in the story reflect the motto 'I spend therefore I am', which was popular in twentieth-century consumer society. It is the capitalist forces that use the urban identity as a discursive tool to regenerate and relocate people in the global capitalist economy. It may be claimed that the author seems to have chosen the name "Big Mal" for the protagonist purposely as it echoes "big mall for shopping" and illustrates that capitalist England made every English citizen a consumer; thus, in return, England also became a consumerist urban space. Urban spaces such as shopping centres or restaurants meet not only the physical needs of people as perceived spaces, but they also provide them with psychological satisfaction as lived spaces because places, where people go shopping, and things, which are purchased or consumed, refer to a lot of things about buyers, including their preferences, social statuses, economic condition and even prestige in the society.

England may be claimed to be a consumer country that urges people to show their class off, even with the food they consume. In this context, food functions as a fetishistic concrete abstraction in restaurants which are built to appease people's hunger. However, the conceived space of these places appeals to different people from distinct layers of society. To illustrate, Burger King is an influential indicator of the global capitalist nature of urbanized England. It is one of the spaces where Mal spends most time with his son ost. As the narrator notes, it "was a kind of nickname" (Amis, 1998, p. 57) in the fast-food industry. Woodward claims that food consumption has a material connection: "[P]eople can only eat what they can afford to eat or what is available within a particular society" (1997, p. 32). Thus, Mal eats in fast-food restaurants instead of expensive ones as he can only afford cheap ones. Another point related to food is that "[w]hat we eat can tell us quite a lot about who we are and about the culture within which we live. Food is a medium through which people can



make statements about themselves" (Woodward, 1997, p. 31). Therefore, it is a fetishistic concrete abstraction in consumer-capitalist society. For instance, although Mal is described as "[n]ot tall but built like a brick khazi: five feet nine in all directions" (Amis, 1998, p. 38), he feels that Fat Lol is in a worse condition, representing the contemporary overweight man consuming fast food all the time. He degrades his friend as he consumes fast food even as he also does so. According to the narrator, Lol is what he eats: "His mouth was a strip of undercooked bacon, his eyes a mush of egg yolk and tinned tomatoes. His nose was like the end of a lightly grilled pork sausage – then the baked beans of his complexion, the furry mushrooms of his ears" (Amis, 1998, p. 61). This imaginary description of Lol's face indicates the analogy between people and the food they consume.

Another function of the food as fetishistic concrete abstraction is its being a referent of social status. According to Woodward, "[t]he consumption of foods may indicate how affluent people are or how cosmopolitan, as well as their religious and ethnic position" (1997, p. 31). For instance, the things Lol eats represent his lower-class position and Christian identity. Black argues about its reasons as follows: "The consumer, and industries geared to consumerism, drove the pace of social change... This was related to a range of factors in the political culture of the period including the dominance of the individual and individual preferences in social mores and practices..." (2004, p. 11). In this regard, as a conceived space, fast-food restaurants such as Burger King, where the lower-class people could afford to eat, addict people to foods like the hamburger to keep them consuming them to let the capitalism run. It also functions as a space gathering people from more or less the same class who are alienated from each other and society. More concretely, as a lived space, Burger King is the common space where Mal may be with Jet, with whom he does not spend much time. In this regard, through the hamburger, which he eats every Saturday with Jet, though he cannot "even say burgers" (Amis, 1998, p. 57), Burger King binds Mal to his fatherhood as lived space because there is almost nothing else to gather them. Burger King creates romantic domination for Mal to compensate for the widening gap between him and his son, who has been brought up as a product and perpetuator of the multicultural and capitalist ideology, alienating people from each other, even parents from their own children. More concretely, Mal feels that "[h]e no longer had the authority or the will... [the] distance was opening between father and son [Jet]" (Amis, 1998, p. 55). Jet represents Rosen's argument that young people were no longer interested in politics, and became 'industrial' bodies from head to feet, which astonished their parents: "By the 1990s youthful styles were largely determined by stores such as Next and The Gap and by manufacturers such as Nike and Adidas" (2003, p. 113). Mal observes his son and thinks: "Styled hair? Since when was that? Jesus: an earring" (Amis, 1998, p. 48). He adds about his son: "Jesus: his teeth were blue. But that was okay. It was just the trace of a lolly he'd managed to get down him, not some new way of deliberately looking horrible. The law of fashion said that every child had to offend its parents aesthetically" (Amis, 1998, pp. 54–55). The narrator states that what concerns the younger generation, perpetuating the capitalist consumer ideology, is how they look and how they dress (Amis, 1998, p. 69); that is, fetishistic concrete abstractions. It is obvious that all social relations in spaces, including that between a parent and a child, are based on materialism. In this regard, the places like Burger King and the school garden are spaces compensating for Mal's estrangement from Jet through various abstractions.

## **Conclusion**

In relation to the Lefebvorean socio-spatial theoretical framework elucidated in the introduction of the study, Amis fictionalizes the multicultural, capitalist, and urbanized England of the twentieth century as a 'socio-political product' and in a dizzily incessant transformation through multiculturalism and capitalism urging classism and consumerism, by shedding light on the lower-class inhabitants. From the approach of the "triad of space", each space in the country is a miniature England representing the aforementioned prevailing ideologies. Thus, the analysis of the selected story illuminates the fact that the functions of the urban space surpass its physical angles. It is produced out of materiality as a perceived space; and dominant ideologies as a conceived space, interfering with every individual's lived space in different aspects at the same time. The study reveals that it is culture and politics that generate different layers of meaning in places, which emerge as spaces. The complex and contradictory nature of the urban

space confuses and stuns its inhabitants by alienating them. England, as a capitalist consumer society, accommodates an alienated society, which clutches onto the social relations in spaces through fetishistic concrete abstractions by transforming experiences and inhabitants into ‘lived abstractions’. The striking conclusion, inferred from the analysis, is that the urban space conceives following generations which are increasingly alienated from the older one as products and perpetrators of the prevalent ideologies, that is, ‘lived abstractions’ in every place they inhabit.

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