

Non-place and Placelessness in *At Daesh Table* by Zahraa Abdallah

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Abstract

At Daesh Table is a novel discussing the story of some Yezidi women captured by the extremists of Daesh when they conquered Iraq. Although those women live in their land, they are deprived of their dignity and honor under the domination of Daesh troops. The concept of non-place is introduced by the French anthropologist Marc Augé to describe places one encountered in supermodern world—full of contradictions and ambiguity. On the other hand, the notion of placelessness is introduced by Edward Relph to refer to the state in which the individual is detached from their environments because of hypermodern features such as excessive capitalism, growing consumerism, oppressive discipline within intricately intermingled locations. The paper tends to apply the two concepts of non-place and placelessness to Zahraa Abdallah's *At Daesh Table*, showing how the elements of abandoning one's home, family and identity contribute much to the realization of such concepts in contemporary globalized world.

Key words

Non-place, placelessness, supermodernity, *At Daesh Table*, Zahraa Abdallah

Introduction

Despite the several advantages of globalization, it contributes largely to the emergence of the concepts of placelessness and non-places. The influence of capitalism and the rising consumerism of the age can be considered as prominent means in such a field. However, the concept of non-place is introduced to cultural studies to denote a transitory location in which human being has to interact with non-humans or mechanical creatures in unenergetic locations, such as cash machine, car park or other domains of vehicle of transportations, supermarkets, computers or scientific laboratories, etc. Sometimes the interaction involves communicating between a human being and another human being working in such irretrievable places. The process of

interaction is characterized by regularity, formality and the absence of real identities. That is, a man in a non-place feels alienated and anonymous, and sometimes hostile to such unfamiliar settings. The loss of identity is indivisibly attributed to non-places and placelessness. Therefore, non-places are not only associated with globalization but also with supermodernity, which is characterized by excessive time, enormously conflicting events, deficiency of memory and impoverished milieus.

Augé maintains that a real place is usually recognized by primary social aspects, remarkable events and it is usually attached to identity: it is therefore anthropological. On the other hand, non-places are spaces which lack the elements of history, society and identity. He emphasizes that non-places are deprived of the anthropological factors distinguishing recognizable sites (78). These places are typically restricted to certain locations, such as hostels, sanatoriums, clubs, expatriate camps, or some other times they can be found in deprived places assigned for lower classes. Non-places, thus, according to Augé, are also considered as lacking feasible communication and individual subjectivity. However, it seems that places and non-places are mutually attached and interchangeably inseparable. They seem to be “opposed polarities; the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten” (79).

Augé argues that non-places are disintegrated from traditional spaces by the homogenizing effect of globalization which can be obviously found in the similarities of multiple cultures previously regarded as drastically different. He relates the crisis of space to the emergence of placelessness and its frequent changes due to supermodernity. While places nowadays seem to be exceedingly connected because of globalization, “it simultaneously erodes their status as local places and entails a standardization of space. As a consequence of this, many faceless settings such as offices, terminals and supermarkets are produced all over the world” (Gebauer 8). Moreover, the notion of non-place is foreshadowed in recent discourse of social hybridity and immigration where various types of movement are underlined as a means of achieving freedom and independence (Gebauer 9).

On the other hand, Edward Relph spotlights the concept of placelessness as spaces of inadequate significance in themselves or the attitude of missing significance in certain places. However, placelessness can be described as a landscape without evident human individuality. They are unobtrusive because they leave no impression in one’s mindset.

That is, the locales which seem pointless and unidentified can typically be described as placeless (143). Introducing the concept of placelessness, Relph eliminates the opposition between space and place, making connection between the two and emphasizing their inseparability. To Relph, places are not abstract locations or tactless space; rather, they are a mixture of geography and human experience. What distinguish places are their abilities to reshape an individual's outlook and communal mores. They are realized by their indispensably prominent power of interacting with human beings. Therefore real places are a mixture of nature and architecture which results in directing one's mentality and behavior, epitomizing special characteristics for each space (141).

In Michel De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he introduces the idea that everyday experiences carried out by conventional human beings should not be regarded as merely a compliant or meaningless issue; instead, they are implicitly indicative of resistance and influence. In other words, the individual for fighting certain external forces, such as oppressive authority or tyrannical colonization, develops tactics and strategies to make use of his/her own space. One of the most striking strategies is wandering in the cities in which the act of rambling is marked as a form of confrontation with the dominating power since this motion can be regarded as a unique form of attaining one's land. It is an act of defiance against the despotic supremacy of urbanization and industrialized authority. Furthermore, De Certeau explains the difference between strategy and tactics as illustrated by the difference between a plan and its applicable procedures. Strategy is the control of power relationships which can only be achieved when the source of power is subject to isolation. On the other hand, tactics can be regarded as "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (71). Therefore, tactics usually take place in the other's domain. The rules of the tactics are determined and imposed by the other authority.

Review of Literature

In "The Non-Place and the Unhomely in Ken Bugul's *Cacophonie*," Swoboda examines the relationship between the concept of non-place by Marc Augé and the idea of unhomeliness by Homi Bhabha in *Cacophonie* by Ken Bugul. The novel discusses a location in which the western aspects are incompatible with the African ones in a postcolonial atmosphere. The conflict centers on a Senegalese protagonist who exists in Bennington which causes her perplexity and loss of identity. Annie Gagiano in "War-affected children in Three African Short Stories: Finding Sanctuary within the Space of

Placelessness” tackles similar topic. The paper discusses how three postcolonial African writers portray the conditions of children affected by war in three short stories “The Camp” by Zimbabwean Dambudzo Marechera, “Laughter beneath the Bridge,” Nigerian Ben Okri and “A good Soldier” by Ethiopian Maaza Mengiste. The research reaches the conclusion that despite various locations in which the children are found, they have in common the sense of loss in such non-places. Marie Mianowski’s “Making Room: Place and Placelessness in Jhumpa Lahiri’s “Hema and Kaushik” in *Unaccustomed Earth*” introduces a significant analysis of the topic of accommodation versus rootlessness through one of the magnificent stories of Jhumpa Lahiri’s collection *Unaccustomed Earth*. The paper focuses on the representation of spatial aspects, the idea of belonging, and the various forms of homesickness.

Aim of paper

The aim of the present study is to explore the notions of place, non-place and placelessness in the novel by Zahraa Abdallah’s *At Daesh Table*. Zahra Abdallah is a Syrian-Lebanese author whose works are mainly concerned with war literature and the immigrant predicaments. *At Daesh Table* is written as a response to the massacres committed by ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) especially in Syria and Iraq. The author depends on the confessions acquired by some female survivors witnessing the conflict. In her interview with Ahmad El-Gammal, she admits that she listened approximately to 100 confessions of some female survivors from Daesh carnages. She is deeply moved by their plights to the degree of stimulating her to write several novels about them. She adds that every story is valid to be a distinctive novel on its own, but their collaborative voices inspired her to write an inclusive novel interspersing the calamities they all encountered (El-Gammal).

Novel Summary

The book discusses how Yofa, a Yezidi girl, is abruptly captured by some military brutal men of Daesh thugs when they invade her village. Accordingly, she is immediately turned into a captive, and totally deprived of her family, home and lover. Her body becomes subject to all sorts of conquerors' abuse. However, the hope of joining her lover, Sirwan, and eloping with him to another location creates her overriding stimulus during the irreconcilable incidents of the narrative. She bravely struggles to set herself free to return to her family and begins a peaceful life with her lover. When she knows

that her younger brother is trained in the terrorist camp nearby, she makes endless attempts to regain him. It is not only the story of Yofa with all her inconsistencies, but of many other women from the Syrian town Raqqa or the Iraqi town Mousel. Their suffering ranges from kidnapping, witnessing the slaughter of their relatives, torturing them and their children maliciously, converting them to another religion, and the successive processes of sexual abuse. What is unique in Yofa's story is the religious stratification in Yezidi's society and their strict discipline of marriage—facts disregarded by other religious sects.

The Prison Here and There

When imprisoned, Yofa resorts to her memories of her past life in her own village in Sinjar with her family. The air of the prison is filled with gloomy silence in contrast with the fresh air of the village. She falls asleep because of the medication given to her; besides, she is deranged due to the violent circumstances she witnesses. The place is terribly antagonistic to her and the other female prisoners as well. Despite remaining in the same village where she used to find coziness and peace of mind, the place, after the invasion, grows unendurable. This occurs when ISIL bombards her village causing the whole location to be covered with an air of terror. When she meets her lover Sirwan in such a disordered space, she is haunted by the feelings of disappointment and the impossibility of her dream to come true. When he previously proposed to her, he was rejected by her family due to his different religious sect. Moreover, her lover asks her to depart with her family immediately since he decides to remain in the sacred places to defend them (Abdallah 6). It seems that the sacred places reflect Sirwan and Yofa's real identity despite their difference and the terror surrounding them. On the other hand, for Yofa the place becomes unimaginable heterotopia—a space combining intimidating contradictions. In trying to differentiate between space and place, one critic declares that, "Place is security, space is freedom: [...]" (Tuan 3). Consequently, the place which no longer provides security to its settlers turns into a non-place.

Communicative Places

Some critics assume that the spaces which are occupied by human beings should be regarded as intimate places— dynamic accommodations. This may be attributed to certain human activities and cultural interactions. Musical expressions, choreographic movements similar to dances and other aesthetic forms of action humanize such a

space and turn it into a communicative place. Moreover, such artistic experiences connect the inhabitants to their place in a coherently friendly culture. "Performance renews bonds of kinship and affection through the repeated engagement of music, dance, and song in a never-ending circle of reciprocal activities that re-create and affirm community" (Richardson 88). On the other hand, placelessness can be identified by lack of human experiences, especially satisfactory ones, due to certain abnormal conditions. This can be epitomized in penalty places, such as prisons or refugee camps. Yofa describes their journey to Badoush Prison in Mousel as unexplainable and unbearable. In an attempt to set herself free from the custody, she recalls her first acquaintance with Sirwan at the village pharmacy. He was the pharmacist who sold her the medicine prescribed for her father. When the recruiter inquires about her name, she remembers the same question asked by Sirwan when she is overwhelmed by the embarrassment caused by his elegance and tenderness. Those emotions give an air of warmth to the pharmacy and the other places associated with their meeting, endowing them with social significance and charming connotations. However, when she is asked the same question by the prison officer, she is totally absorbed in terror and agony. The prison to which she is transferred is seen as placelessness—devoid of any positive meaning (Abdallah 28-32).

Ecocriticism and Geocriticism

In discussing the relationship between space, place and narration, some critics consider that literature has the merit of turning spatial patterns into dynamic spheres. In other words, narrative models contribute mainly to producing fictional maps and unreal trajectories which transform the usual functions of these places and spaces. Therefore, "narrative provides more than mere representations of space; that it is not limited to the realm of mediated, secondary, imagined reality" (Bieger and Maruo-Schroder 5). There is another tendency which views the ecocritical realm as overlapping with the geocritical. Literature can be seen as a means by which the social and natural spheres synchronously interact, and conflict with each other. In literary works, a human kind is presented as part and parcel of the whole world composed of nature and culture. The stereotyped depiction of man as usually on good terms with natural order surrounding him/her is typically criticized as superficially idealistic—not plausible. It is maintained that the narrator's main function is to provide imaginary maps for the natural and social

environments of a human being who is destined to fight endlessly with all his surroundings (Tally Jr. and Battista 3).

Individual and Communal Identity

Relph postulates that the notion of place is indescribably immense: it can range from a very tiny narrow sphere to a very spacious location. However, what characterizes a place is the infinite communication among all its components. Places are typically composed of numerous articles interacting with each other continuously such as natural objects, artifacts, and most importantly, human emotions and experiences related to those places. To Relph, the most vital element in a certain place is the identity formed by human inclinations and practices. "They [places] are important sources of individual and communal identity, and are often profound centers of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties" (147). When Yofa is obliged to depart her dwelling towards the mountainous land outside the village for evading the terrorists' raid, she and her family fall prey to the gangsters of the ISIL. The men and the old women of the village are vehemently separated from their families and they are finally shot dead. The young girls and ladies are taken to an unknown place, an unidentified setting. To Yofa, the place in which she is seized is described merely as a room—ambiguous and dreadful. She is frightened that although the room is not large enough with only twenty chairs, two hundred Yezidi women are forced to remain in it for a long period (Abdallah 13). In contrast with Sinjar to which she belongs, the undefined location in which she is captured is typically a disagreeable non-place.

When Yofa is sold to Abu-Muhammed Al-Raqqawi, She is obliged to ride a Camion assigned for transferring oil, where she reluctantly sits between the driver and Al-Raqqawi. She realizes that she is taken to an unknown destination where she would be treated like a slave. In fact, the choice of the Camion as vehicle of transportation has a connotation as a reference to the greedy nature of the conquerors and their voluptuousness. Not only does she suffer from loss of distinctiveness and distorted mentality, but also from nostalgic feelings of longing for her lover. The adjacency of her body to the vigorous owner reminds her of her closeness to Sirwan when they met in an abandoned house. However, with Al-Reqqawi she is overwhelmed by revulsion due to the humiliation she encountered and the contravention of her determination and pride. It is argued that non-places are applicable to every location where there are uncontrollable authority and obligatory documents imposing specific instructions on its

inhabitants. The dictatorial nature of those instructions drives everyone to resist them. Actual places are anthropological, creating social unification; whereas non-places and placelessness cause “solitary contractuality.”

The link between the individuals and their surroundings in the space of non-places is established through the mediation of words, or even texts. We know, for a start, that there are words that make images—or rather, images: the imagination of a person who has never been to Tahiti or Marrakesh takes flight the moment these names are read or heard. (Augé 94-95)

Unlike the inside coziness of one’s home, non-places are characterized by unfriendliness. Therefore, they are places which can never be attached to one’s feelings and individuality. Since non-places are not in line with humanization, they are characterized by texts and instructions rather than social communication. It seems that man is immensely dehumanized in those non-places because of such insensible labels and instructions. “This establishes the traffic conditions of spaces in which individuals are supposed to interact only with texts, whose proponents are not individuals but ‘moral entities’ or ‘institutions’ [...]” (Augé 96). Yofa likens her long despondent journey with Al-Raqqawi to his house to a tormented turtle left for the legs of a group of irresponsible youth merely for kicking her frantically. Confused and disturbed, she is immersed in reading the labels in the street merely for passing time and acquainting with such a place. However, the journey to her new residence seems distant and offensive. Moreover, she is astonished and disgusted by the several captions of instructions, beards of ISIL men and their black flags. Those words coming from the driver and Al-Raqqawi’s mouth emphasize the pleasure they felt in Iraq for the accumulated fortune gained by oil and the pretty women they appropriate. On the other hand, their happiness is contrasted with Yofa’s deep anguish over her appropriated land, the exploitation of natural resources and the degradation of indigenous women. Next to her feeling of insecurity, she is offended by their black beards and flags in which their instructions are written—“Welcome to Islamic country” (Abdallah 58-59).

Submission and Placelessness

Although Yofa remains in Iraq, her country, during the detained period of ISIL, she is frequently immersed in her daydreaming and imagination, refusing to yield to the fact that she is merely a helpless captive. Moreover, she describes how a group of Yezidi ladies is humiliated and compelled to march after the warden in a line like a crowd of animals. They are taciturn and submissive because of their long stay at such a speechless locality. Like all other prisoners, in this frustrated condition, she is forced to enter Padosh Prison. In such a place she is turned into lifeless commodities—sold and bought indifferently. To her, the prison is an intolerably enclosed and indefinite setting owing to the enormous surrounding walls and its horrendous dimness. When the prison's gate is abruptly opened, she thinks that she will pass through unendurable incidents because of the unavoidable identity of her Yezidi origin. The spectacle of the other women entering the jail, disappearing in the darkness is described as appalling and unspeakable. The whole location is tainted with fear, uncertainty and indefiniteness (Abdallah 32). Yofa's example is described by Relph as placelessness. "Placelessness describes both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude which does not acknowledge significance in place" (Relph 143).

It seems that Michel de Certeau's concept of non-place is more related to Relph's placelessness rather than Augé's. For Augé, non-locality can best be realized in traveling, "in which the movement adds the particular experience of a form of solitude" (Ungur 5). In fact, Yofa family's journey is displeasing and disturbing—filled with contradictions. When Yofa is detached from her mother and brother, she is completely forlorn. She witnesses how her brother is seized from her mother's hands to be recruited at ISIL war. He joins a group of children—the eldest of them is merely thirteen. His fear and bewilderment are reflected in his innocent face, imploring for returning back to his family. Again, the officers begin to register the names of the children successively—as a sign of documentation related to non-places. Their journey to the camp is tainted with disgrace and alienation. Not only does Yofa's mother scream for the parting between her and her son, but also all other Yezidi women do. For the conquerors, the only way to shut them up is by beating them mercilessly (Abdallah 25).

Gunner Sandin emphasizes that a remarkable type of non-places is that in which one encounters exclusion or denunciation. In other words, places in which there is lack of estimation and blatant discrimination can be considered as typical non-places. The most

obvious example is the absence of places for women in men's tyrannical sphere. This can be explained in terms of underestimation for women roles or their male-exploitation whether in remote history or recent years. Luce Irigaray is the one who condemns patriarchal thoughts dismissing or depreciating women's domains. "She points to how the role of bodily difference between the sexes generates conceptions for the place and non-place of women" (69). Yofa describes how she is lined with other Yezidis girls, approximately naked, for being displayed and sold to ISIL fighters. She feels deeply disgraced and immensely wronged. The humiliation began earlier when they were told to have showers as a preparatory step for merchandising to the ISIL's men. She declares that they are really in bad need of having a shower to regain their strength and comfort, but not at this time nor in that particular place. It seems that they are evidently displaced and dispossessed. She is totally alarmed by the chilly water of the cold weather which brought her headache again. She needs to be warmed because of the cruelty of the water and the terror with which she is obsessed. The shower she is forced to have is likened to a step to the process of mortification. The body is no longer hers, nor the place. The most demeaning moment for her is when they are asked to wear light shiny clothes for being sold to the fighters whom she detests most as they are usurpers of her land and body. To her, that moment is an epitome of death; the place symbolizes a grave (Abdallah 42-43).

It is claimed that the difference between the concepts of place and non-place is agreed upon in architecture, geographical and anthropological propositions. "There is either 'place'—genuine, authentic, lived—or there is "placelessness," characterized by anonymity, lack of life, ugly architecture, exploitation or other kinds of threats to a presumably human environment" (Sandin 69). Placelessness can frequently be equated with homelessness. To some critics, placelessness denotes pointlessness, insignificant signs, insufficient diversity, and lack of experiences. Therefore, the only feeling people attain in placelessness is estrangement since they are out of home and abandoned. Placelessness is where the geometric dimensions of the place are accentuated at the expense of human potentials. The insignificance of the location and its lack of social dimensions consequently seem to be the most notable traits of its placelessness (Relph 143).

Dehumanization and Non-places

On the other hand, the most important quality which can be attributed to a place is its attachment to one's uniqueness. Therefore the birth place is the most essential factor shaping one's mode of thoughts. Buchman condemns Augé's notion of non-place not only for its opposition to De Certeau's, but also because Augé's notion of non-place converts the meaning to a sort of nostalgia for some spiritual, rustic type of communal existence. Therefore the qualities of vagueness and impersonality of Augé's non-place is contrastively attributed to de Certeau's places (üngür 6). When Yofa endeavors to escape, she is again arrested and imprisoned in a small dark room containing only a small window. Moreover, she is left alone as a type of punishment. She is very exhausted because of the intolerable slashes she receives. The dimness, uneasiness and nastiness of the room add to its ambiguity— features attached usually to non-places. As usual, she remembers Sirwan to regain her peace of mind. She tries to remember his fragrance which sticks to her body even after departure. Unfortunately, while she is overwhelmed by her memories, she is simultaneously raped by the leader and four other brutal soldiers. Consequently, she faints and when she regains her consciousness, she feels the rigidity and aloofness of the room despite the intolerable hot atmosphere of August, not to mention the bleeding, pain and embarrassment she severely undergoes (Abdallah 76-77).

The dehumanization of human beings in a non-place is epitomized in the idea of converting speech into silence, communication into wordless movements, human beings into worthless merchandises. Yofa seems demeaned by the torture and physical manipulation of ISIL's men. When she attends the court as condemned for her endeavor to escape, she is completely agitated by the pictures of Yezidi women on the walls. These photos are hanged for displaying those girls as merely products bought and sold by the terrorists. Moreover, on each picture the name of the owner and his phone number are written in an attempt to facilitate the process of trading in such an incomprehensible location. To Augé, all non-places are invaded by manuscripts and silence rather than interaction and speech. People there suffer from misunderstanding and unsociability. For example, in a supermarket the client in an attempt to search for certain goods, resorts to soundless marching for investigation, comparing between prices silently, handing the prices mechanically and wordlessly to the cashier. The process of commerce is overwhelmed by stillness either in reading labels, in weighing

goods or even in paying the bills. All marketable processes are done mutely with fixed instructions and emotionless documentation characterizing such inaccessible non-places. Therefore, non-places seem to be immersed in lack of communication and technical guidelines. "The user of a non-place is in contractual relations with it (or with the power that governs it). He is reminded, when necessary, that the contract exists (101).

Dissatisfaction and Non-places

It is argued that settings which are characterized by voidness, fragmentation, and deficiencies in visual standards can be described as non-places or "sites." Examples of such "sites" or placelessness are the occupied suburbs, marginalized courtyards, transaction markets and transportation stations. These locations are notable for aloofness and absence of architectural standards representing actual places therefore they are indolent scenes which can never cause satisfaction or inspiration for those dwelling in them or even the passers-by (Sandin 70). When Yofa is obliged to return back to the court, she observes that the process of transacting women as sheep is vivid and unstoppable. The feelings Yofa gets are a mixture of revulsion and longing for screaming for departing such a terrible city. She wants to tell the world that what happens in such a dreadful part of the universe is indescribable. She is shattered by such brutalizing treatment enforced by ISIL's community, but she cannot declare her thoughts. Accordingly, she records everything in her memory to be reported later to the whole world for criminalizing such terrorist groups when released.

Absorbed in her consuming thoughts of escaping and vengeance, she finds an old man approaching her and examining her as a low-priced product. Fortunately, he passes without observation and another man comes searching for two women to buy: one as a gift for his brother and the other one would be green-eyed merely for his delight. She tries to close her eyes for shunning such a situation, however he immediately notices her and purchases her and Raham, a young girl at fifteen, for his brother. When they reach their destination, Raham falls in a screaming fit, imploring Yofa not to leave her for such unknown horrific men. Again, Yofa is imprisoned in his private room— incoherent and painful. The man who buys her is called Abu-Hager Al-Tunssi. He brought her food and asked her to eat and sleep with him, yet she was too hungry and exhausted. She observes a single window in the middle of the wall of such a detaining chamber. This window stands for an opening for rejuvenation for her incompatible

thoughts provided that she can withdraw or escape from such an inaccessible non-place. Such a window overlooks the backyard in which small shrubs are grown separating between the house and another big yard looking like a court hedged with dust. The time is sunset, and she is possessed by the feeling of withdrawal (Abdallah 78-81).

Transgression and Non-place

Confined in such a secluded gloomy room, Yofa is entirely irritated that her impending future is turned disastrous by ISIL's invasion. Instead of marrying Sirwan who is previously rejected by her family for his different creed, she now spends her miserable days with those ghastly terrorists whose doctrine considers her merely as an unworthy atheist—non-human. What makes her survive is her dream of regaining Sirwan and adjusting her life by dismissing the ISIL from her memory and land. Consequently, she is heartbroken by her parent's unjustifiable refusal and her compliant response. Apart from her daydreaming, she is frightened by watching the young Yezidi boys trained by ISIL's fighters. The scene of young male children carrying weapons and trying to shoot at a determined target is very striking and upsetting for her. Moreover, their repeated yells, declaring their affiliation to the ISIL's troops are very disturbing. She thinks that her brother Shafan who is at six may be one of them. Unfortunately, he will be brought up with such antagonistic ideas which will make him not only detest his family but also endlessly fight them. This action of altering one's principles and social norms because of submissive permanent power is called transgression. "Indeed, it appears that transgression may become inseparable from space and apply to large groups. Space is generally seen as stable (except when it is ravaged by war, which aims to alter their established order" (Westphal 45).

Insideness of Places

It is maintained that "the experience of the insideness" of places is associated with the subliminal mind. This can be illustrated in the paradigm of home where one's origins can be found, where one can enjoy the feelings of protection and relaxation. This experience is indispensable to the essence of a place. However, it is not related to the cultural aspects. "This is, in fact, existential insideness—the unselfconscious and authentic experience of place as central to existence" (Relph 142). The experience of insideness is felt by Yofa not only at home, but with Sirwan wherever they reside. When

she was jailed with Al-Raqqawi in a single bedroom, immediately after his wife's departure, she felt throttled and entirely unprotected. The only way to avoid this feeling is by summoning her joy with Sirwan when they are alone in a single room. They used to flatter each other, absorbed in love and ecstasy. On the other hand, during these imaginative moments full of delight, she hopes to find him, describing herself as a reckless wild animal wrongly engaged for taming, but it is turned helpless because of its fragility. She remembers her aunt Koori whose main dream was to attend Yofa's wedding when she would wear the white dress. The inescapable fact is that by Koori's slaughter at the terrorist's hands, Yofa's wedding dream vanishes for good. Her subliminal mind asserts that at this particular moment, she is contrastively dressed in black due to the most distasteful country ever imagined by the most realistic and romantic inhabitants (Abdallah 65).

The next day Yofa seems dishonored by her owner's sexual assault, despite his flattery comments and appeasing attempts to attain her love. However, she decides to attract him merely for restoring her brother—Shafan. When he kisses her vehemently, she asks him to search for her brother Shafan among Ashbal Al-Khilafah. He retorts that his brother Sajed gives religious lessons to young boys; therefore, he may immediately find her brother. After his departure, the enslaved women gather together by the doors as if they were chatting at a tea table. They exchange talks about their previous cheerful lives and their contemporary opposing predicaments. Ronhay, another young lady, recalls her reminiscences about her life at her accommodation, which has a vine garden cultivated mainly by her husband. During her speech, Ronhay longs for the dust smell of such a garden which her husband turns into a paradise. She remembers such an eye-catching abode because during these days of the year the grape trees yield their colorful fruits—red and greeny white. She recalls how they are attached to such an orchard and their inexpressible joy during the moments of harvest. Ronhay promises to let her colleagues taste the sweetness of the grapes which she squeezes if they are finally able to return home. The security of her home is felt especially when she and her children gather together round the fire in a luxurious familial bond. However, at this particular moment, she hopes that the harvest may be destroyed lest the terrorists swallow it (Abdallah 88-89). Relph is immensely concerned with the idea of people's identification with certain places. He considers the three main components distinguishing a particular place as its material location, the accomplishments practiced in it, and the collective significance initiated by such a place. "For Relph, the crux of this lived intensity is

identity with place, which he defines through the concept of insideness—the degree of attachment, involvement, and concern that a person or group has for a particular place” (David and Sowers 45).

When Yofa realizes that her new owner, Abu-Hager, is assassinated, her emotion is confounded, a combination of fear and happiness. What she wants is to find her brother and regain her liberty, not only for shielding him but also for protecting herself. Therefore, she insists on going to his brother Sajed’s habitation simultaneously when he asks Raham to pray with him for the soul of Abu-Hager, then Yofa reluctantly joined them. After praying, Raham has a nap, and Yofa intrudes into Sajed’s chamber to find him melancholically contemplating Abu-Hager’s picture. Yofa endeavors to seduce him for informing her about her brother, then Sajed’s only response is to rape her. However, he finally confesses that he never notices her brother, and she is abruptly shocked. Moreover, he denies the idea that he teaches children any religious lessons. Yofa feels deeply uncomfortable and degraded. She describes the city as the most melancholic city in which every citizen warns against sin then voluntarily commits it. She is destroyed by such a catastrophic city, which is filled with contradictions (Abdallah 45). Relph’s contribution to insideness as a locational concept illustrates many elements of the dimensions of placelessness. On the other hand, a person to feel inside a certain place, she/he has to be sheltered, not endangered, relaxed rather than ill-at-ease, contented rather than exhausted. It seems that a person’s identity is fully realized when he is inside an accommodated place (Seaman and Sowers 45).

Xenophobia and non-place

In the proceedings of the United Nation, it is claimed that all over the world people are agonized due to racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Despite the victims’ cultural differences, they all have in common suffering from external oppression, marginalization and subordination (2). The xenophobic attitude towards Yezidi society and other marginal sects in Iraq is epitomized in the novel, especially in the scenes of trafficking. Yofa is sold for the fourth time to another terrorist who buys her at 1500\$—irrespective of her will and dignity. The man is a prince at fifty in the ISIL’s organization, whose name is Seif. In his residence she meets his wife who declares that she is a Christian lady whose name is Maria, and recounts to Yofa how she is compelled to convert to another religion. Initially Yofa is astonished that his wife treats her fairly without any prejudice; moreover, she asserts to Yofa that she will not impose on her

any divine doctrine. Maria tells her how the ISIL conquered her village, imposing their creed upon all citizens; otherwise they had to pay El-Jizya. Seif arrests her father who was an elderly man and leaves the choice for her—either to be a Muslim and marry him or to murder her father. She undoubtedly chooses her father's liberty. Therefore Maria announces to Yofa that both of them are similar (Abdallah 111-112). They are persecuted and wronged in such a criminal place without any reasonable justification mainly due to the xenophobic attitude of Daesh men.

A strong relationship grows between Yofa and Maria despite their opposite affiliations. Yofa implores her to fetch a mobile to contact her lover, Sirwan, and Maria secretly gives her the device twice, but all Yofa's attempts go in vain. She cunningly evades Seif endeavors to have intercourse with her until they hear the disparaging bombardment of the coalition forces. Although Yofa wishes for the total obliteration of Daesh community, she still clutches to life, especially during the night of raiding. For her, it is unpredictable that Seif has to escape in one direction, and orders his guard to smuggle Maria to another place until the raid stops. However, Yofa is left alone, unable to do anything but to witness the destructive barrage and waits for her death with the other members' remnants of the brutal organization. Again she is captured by another man called Hazem who accompanies her to a small apartment composed of one area divided into two tiny rooms, a small bathroom and a kitchen devoid of everything. Her feeling of hollowness is profoundly irrepressible. The location in which she is positioned seems completely empty: there is neither human being, nor food. All what she can observe is distasteful insects—cockroaches and wandering ants. She is thoroughly immersed in her memories of Sinjar, her home there and the wild setting in which she meets Sirwan (Abdallah 112-123).

Existential Insideness and Placelessness

Relp postulates that it is not the idea of home and nostalgic feelings to one's birth place which establishes the place as existential insideness; rather, it is the concept of peace and non-violent atmosphere in certain places which endow them with intimacy and distracts them from existential outsidersness. "The longer-term question is what qualities and forces in our society lead to a situation where the existential insideness of home and at-hominess devolves into hurtfulness and despair" (Seamon and Sowers 49). Yofa acknowledges that despite the darkness and shortage of food, she feels comfortable in such a disagreeable house. The only reason seems that she is left alone

without those malicious men frequently attempting to rape her. Three days have passed since she ate or drank anything. When it rains, she is eager to expand her tongue through the window's bars to catch small droplets of water. However, she fails to drink therefore she stretches her arm so that it may be moisturized to appease her thirst. Hamza appears at night, carrying many bags of merchandise. He is astonished that she is still alive. She asks him for water and he gives her a bottle. He tells her that he fixes the plumbing system so that she can cook and have a shower. Above all, he reports that the prince departs, leaving her for him as a gift. Again she is treated as an item, not a human being, and she has no choice or ability to refuse. Eventually, he asks her to be prepared for spending the night with him and one of his friends who will attend tonight. To add a serious tone to his speech, he threatens her with murdering if she disobeys (Abdallah 124-126).

Apocalypticism and Placelessness

It seems that *At Daesh table* is one of the apocalyptic novels which regard earth as a place of condemnation and heaven as a place of reward. The house in which Hamza places Yofa is nasty and unspeakable; besides, she is preoccupied with a sense of disgust with what has happened to her; however, a very wicked idea abruptly strikes her mind. She decides to pretend that she is in harmony with Hamza and his friend in order to remain alive and to escape afterwards. Hamza gives her a very seductive red dress and she wears it, pretending that she is submissive. When Hamza and his friend see her, they are already allured by her beauty; consequently, she asks him to have dinner before having the intercourse with her since all of them are certainly hungry. She puts sleeping pills given to her by her first owner, during her first mortal experience with him, in their food. After having dinner, they fell asleep, and she decides to depart. However, before leaving the place she vehemently cuts their veins for fear that they may wake up and pursue her for revenge. She is surprised at her latent courage and brutality which she gained by her involvement with Daesh gangsters. She decides to cross to the other bank of the river to regain her freedom, but she wears a veil which conceals her face. She is in a state of total loss and baffled distortion, and her feeling of placelessness is growing. In her attempt to elope among such darkness, she is uneasy yet she finds a cemetery and decides to enter it as she remembers her aunt Koori who used to warn her of living persons—not mortal ones (Abdallah 126-131).

Yofa tries to phone Sirwan for more than twenty times with the mobile stolen from Hamza, but her efforts go fruitlessly. When the sun begins to rise, she decides to resort to any abode nearby for protection. She knocks on three doors but no one answers her. Afterwards, she goes into a small alley and knocks on the door of an elderly woman who opens it and shelters her. Because Yofa is too exhausted, the old woman is very kind; therefore she offers her tea and a blanket for warming. Her name is Om Soliman and she mollifies Yofa by accomodating her. Finally she feels at ease at her home. Yofa sleeps and when she wakes up, she finds Om Soliman prepares for them the breakfast and asks her to have the meal with her. Yofa is astonished that Om Soliman has the same religious sect as Daesh's, but she is totally benevolent. Om Soliman repeats frequently that Daesh's men and women are not Muslim at all and they do not represent real Islamic principles. She advises Yofa to depart as soon as possible with the help of Ahmad, one of her relatives, who has a pickup for transferring cattle. Yofa asks her for a mobile to contact Sirwan in order to assist her. Finally Sirwan retorts and she profoundly weeps with him like a homeless child. He tells her that he bravely defends their religious settings which are attacked numerously by the terrorists. He agrees with her that they will meet each other in the gardens near Mosul's borders and she gives him Ahmad's number.

The next day Yofa is disguised in the shape of a sheep to be transferred among the congested cattle to another peaceful place. When she is positioned among the several sheep, she contemplates the violence of those men who disgrace and mistreat other marginalized people, mainly because they are different. In spite of her abhorrence of such a dwindling place in which animals are gathered with men in such a disgusting milieu, the location is less confusing to her as she is free from Daesh restrictions. She prefers to remain with animals rather than to return to the merciless men of the ISIL. After half an hour she removes the disguising articles from her face and wears a veil pretending that she is Soha—Ahmad's wife. Ahmad emphasizes that he agrees with Sirwan that they will meet at seven o'clock. They reach the garden at half past six and hopefully wait for a long time for the appearance of Sirwan, but he does not come. Her attempts to phone him fail. Ahmad informs Yofa that Sirwan's destiny is unpredictable because he was fighting their enemy the day before when she chatted with him. Ahmad's dialogue frightens Yofa, yet she does not lose hope. Ahmad tries to open new discussions with her to appease her pain, but she can hardly hear him. What she can do

is to shake her head mechanically and be immersed in her inescapable preoccupations with Sirwan in her native village (Abdallah 143-145).

Like all those intolerable moments, she resorts to daydreaming, imagining the approach of her lover who would emerge to rescue her of an unknown horrendous destiny. She is so obsessed with the sensation of his arrival that she can smell his odor which is mixed with wet dust moisturized by rain. She imagines him in dark blue trousers and olive green jacket waiting for her. She imagines him, hugging and kissing her enormously, and she reproaches him for delaying. Above all, she remembers how he was so jealous over her that he cannot imagine her with someone else. However, she feels polluted with the smell of those invaders who intrude her land and ruthlessly manipulate her. Again she recovers her consciousness and begins to worry about Sirwan's postponement. When the time passes, she realizes that Sirwan will never come, and she is lost in such an unquestionable bordering land. She observes a worm which quickens to her hole to protect herself from her enemies and wishes to be similar to it. When she gets desperate of the possibility of attaining her freedom and her lover again, she decides to cross the boundaries and asks Ahmad to depart. Ahmad warns her of the mines planted in those bordering gardens, which may explode her body, but she is eventually resolute (Abdallah 146-147). At this particular moment, Yofa finds the only solution is moving to the other land or to end her life. It seems that the author tends to end the novel in an apocalyptic way:

The apocalyptic conception of space presumes the existence of two realities, the transcendent and the mundane. Although these realities are usually called "heaven" and "earth," they are ontological categories, not physical or cosmological. In the apocalyptic mindset, heaven—the transcendent reality—is the genuine and perfect reality. It is indivisible, eternal, and the sole source of true information. In contrast, earth—the mundane reality—is regarded as heaven's opposite in every respect. (DiTommaso 216)

Conclusion

Non-places and placelessness are two contemporary terms mainly attached to hypermodernity which appeared in the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century as a result of the rapid development in scientific field and technology. Augé relates the emergence of non-place to supermodernity which is used interchangeably with hypermodernity mainly due to the acceleration in time and place in postmodern era. Supermodernity and hypermodernity have in common the accumulation of knowledge, spatial overabundance and overstated subjectivity. Non-places are more associated with placelessness in the globalized world overloaded with socially fluctuating political affairs. Disastrous elements surrounding a human being cause immigration and homelessness to numerous citizens all over the world. *At Daesh Table* examines the theme of immigration and dispossession in a certain Yezedi village conquered by some terrorists. On the other hand, weapons and other destructive artifacts produced by means of the hastening power of military forces in such a complex world result in the total loss of one's space and place; therefore, they cause the damage of human's individuality. Those feelings of estrangement and the absence of one's home and land can be embodied in the novel's main characters—Yofa and other captive women. Despite the fact that those characters exist in their land, they are aimlessly drifting. Moreover, they forcibly go through evacuation, discrimination, persecution and sometimes assassination as a result of defending their land and identity. They were previously marginalized in Iraq and Syria; however, when Daesh occupies their land, they are completely unsheltered. Furthermore, they are subject to successive events of oppressive procedures, merely because of their identity. In other words, non-places and placelessness are the normal outcome of globalization which generates war and other political unending conflicts. People in such urban spaces are turned speechless and perplexed owing to their suppressive conditions.

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