

Space in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and
Saad Kassim Al-Asady's *Deserted Streets*
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الفضاء في رواية "صورة سيدة" لهنري جيمس ورواية "شوارع مهجورة"

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Abstract

The major aim of this research paper is to discuss the presentation of space in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and Saad Kassim Al-Asady's *Deserted Streets* (2020). Despite the big difference in dates of publications, space, in both novels, plays a significant role in shaping characters' attitudes and revealing their psychological states. Besides, in the two novels, spaces show themselves in almost similar forms such as hostile, friendly, domestic, consoling or historical, but in all these forms they are not merely a backdrop or a setting for the events. They are active elements that arouse certain feelings and suggest meanings that enhance the general themes of the novels. There is a strong interaction between space and human characters.

Key Words: Space, Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, Saad Kassim Al-Asady, *Deserted Streets*, psychological effects, human character.

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث بشكل رئيسي إلى مناقشة تمثيل الفضاء في روايتي "صورة سيدة" لهنري جيمس (١٨٨١) و"شوارع مهجورة" لسعد قاسم الأسدي (٢٠٢٠). على الرغم من الاختلاف الكبير في تاريخ النشر، يلعب الفضاء في كلتا الروايتين دوراً هاماً في تشكيل سلوكيات الشخصيات وكشف حالتها النفسية. علاوة على ذلك، تظهر الفضاءات في الروايتين بأشكال متشابهة تقريباً، كالعائدية، والودية، والعائلية، والمواساة، والتاريخية، إلا أنها في جميع هذه الأشكال ليست مجرد خلفية أو إطار للأحداث، بل هي عناصر فاعلة تُثير مشاعر معينة وتُوحى بمعاني تُعزز المواضيع العامة للروايتين. هناك تفاعل قوي بين الفضاء والشخصيات البشرية. الكلمات المفتاحية: الفضاء، هنري جيمس، صورة سيدة، سعد قاسم الأسدي. شوارع مهجورة، تأثيرات نفسية، شخصية الإنسان

Introduction

Space is the most important pillar in the narrative process. It goes alongside time and characters to form the narrative structure. Space plays a great role in forming and drawing the ambience that characters move through, and it is the field in which we feel the passage of time. Though time marks the temporal frame of events and lives of characters and displays what occurs in the fictional process, space is the milieu that encompasses all the narrative elements. Whether time happens in history according to historical events or breaks the linear time, it will remain in the compass of space (Heidegger, 466). Time and space as a unit are the nucleus of the novel and without them, there is no narrative process (Meyerhoff, 3). Space acquires a great role in the novel not only that it is the place where all events take place and characters move through, but it is the environment where characters express their viewpoints, and it is the cornerstone that develops the building of the novel

besides revealing the protagonist's view and author's as well. It is not the piece of cloth in the painting, but it is the space that the painting creates (Al-Naseer, 10).

Murtadha, a critic, states that the novel is the best literary genre that tackles space (Murtadha, 155). He compares architects and novelists in building space. He sees that space created by the architect is limited, so he is unable to draw more than one scene for space, while the space created by the novelist is a space without boundaries, its extension is open on all directions. The novelist has the ability to mold space according to his imagination; he can make it cross seas, mountains, valleys; in other words, he can make space beyond geography by using descriptions, artistic images and colors. With description, all the details and dimensions of space can be described; the novelist invests the physical elements of space to display topographic images of space that tell us its external shape where the reader feels that s/he lives in a real world, not in an imaginary one. The description depends primarily on the artistic image, which is the result of imagination effectiveness, which oversteps the physical elements of space to the emotional sense that the reader feels (ibid, 158). Color is one of the artistic elements that the novelist employs to give the visual shape of space; the use of a specific color has great significance. If the narrator describes the sea, s/he adds, for instance, the blue and green colors to indicate the symbolism of water. The blue indicates power, while the green symbolizes life and immortality (Al-Fawaz, 35).

II

Space in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*

1. Henry James: the innovator

Henry James was born in New York in 1843. He was naturalized as a British citizen in 1915. He spent most of his life travelling throughout Europe. His father was a self-made millionaire and well-educated, believing in the universality of teaching. Therefore, he exposed his son to different cultures and orientations. He wanted him to be prolific in knowledge, so he sent him to study in London, Paris, Rome, Geneva and other European cities. Travelling in Europe provided James with the germs of stories and made him feel rootless, searching for an identity.

James is usually considered a transitional figure between literary realism and literary modernism. Before him, novelists depended primarily on an omniscient narrator who has full knowledge of what the protagonist does and feels. Instead, James introduces the term "point of view," which proposes simply that it is the characters who introduce themselves and exhibit their viewpoints. He does so through a new narrative technique which is called "stream of consciousness". In fact, there were shy attempts before him to break the dominance of omniscient narrators, but with James, the idea of this new trend reaches maturation (Brasch, 8).

In the Victorian age, the novelist focused mainly on social issues, but with the coming of the twentieth century, by the efforts of novelists like Henry James, the interest was shifted more to the individual's feelings and sufferings. The modernist hero is shown to be one who lives in spiritual exile as an outsider. In other words, the hero thinks and behaves apart from her/his society. Henry James is considered by critics as the father of the modern novel, which means he was the first novelist who theorized and applied his theories to his novels. Before him, the events in the novel moved mostly in a linear time sequence with little attention to the setting, but with James, there is a break in time sequence and the emphasis is shifted inward: the inner self of the character is revealed through interior monologue and free association. Space becomes significant, and much care is paid to show the interaction between the human and her/his environment. James introduces the "point of view" technique in which he delves deeper into his characters' consciousness and reveals their deep dark sides where they narrate and expose all that is related to events, places and psychological states (ibid, 9).

2. Space in *The Portrait of a Lady*

In his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James appears to be fascinated with the houses that are made to be an echo of the characters. Houses express the reality of human character. They are no longer solid places for human inhabitation, but they reveal the depth of characters. Thus, he pays a lot of attention to space, especially to the houses, which he sees as to reflect the real identity of the characters (James, ix). *The Portrait of a Lady* does not present prominent and noticeable events; rather, it displays descriptions of mental and psychological states related to space. In the "Preface", the significance of fiction is presented through the metaphor of the house:

"The house of fiction has ... not one window, but million-a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced, or still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will" (ibid).

Space contributes to shaping the viewpoint of characters in the narrative process as it sheds its shadows on their lives, and its impact remains in their subconscious minds (Bahrawi, 20). In *The Portrait of a Lady*, different kinds of space can be detected, such as historical, domestic, hostile, closed and open spaces. There is also "the consoling space," where the protagonist, Isabel Archer, can discharge her sad emotions and get some consolation to her broken soul. The domestic space is any house, cottage, village, town or any space that is related to one's sweet memories crystallized in this place. It gives the feeling of safety and comfort to the people who were brought up in it, and it remains in their imagination as nostalgia to childhood (Bachelard, 15).

Isabel Archer, the central protagonist, on her journey to find the world and mature, leaves her home in Albany, New York, which is cold and with no sense of life, and goes to London where she lives in her aunt's, Mrs. Touchett's, house called Garden Court built in the Edwardian era. Garden court is a typical place that represents the historical space in which traces of the past can be seen. The area is inhabited by many families whose roots go back to the Edwardian period. Every part of it refers to the past and historical events that happened near it. The house gives these families a strong sense of self-importance. It is depicted in this way:

"It stood upon a low hill, above the river-the river being the Thames some forty miles from London. A long-gabled front of red brick, with the complexion of which time and the weather had played all sorts of pictorial tricks, only, however, to improve and refine it" (James, 6).

Archer's trip to London to live in her aunt's house comes as an escape from the sense of depression. The Garden Court is open and gives a space of liberty and joy. The scene of serving tea with colored cups reflects the nature of its owners, who are open-minded and spontaneous and love life and joy.

For her, Garden Court is a domestic and open space as it provides her with safety, care and love. Noticeably, the name of the house itself refers to all that is related to comfort, happiness, leisure and relaxation, as if it were a piece of paradise. Though Garden Court offers the life that she has missed in her house in Albany, Isabel does not like to restrict herself in it; she wants to see other places to enjoy freedom. Her aunt Mrs. Touchett notices that and tells her to conform to the British conventions, but she defies these conventions and makes her decision to leave this place and enjoys her freedom, tasting the life that she has dreamed of living (Brasch, 26).

During Isabel's stay at Garden Court, she is admired by Lord Warburton, Mr. Touchett's friend, who asks to marry her. Once she visits his house, she refuses him. The place plays a role in her decision. She perceives through his house that he is conservative, lacking artistic taste, though he pretends that he is liberal. She has the impression that the house, like its owner, has lost its original purity despite the attempt, through imposed decoration, to make it look like a legend in fairy tales that young ladies are usually unable to escape its temptation. She has at that moment a sort of intuition that this castle hides his real character. Isabel sees this place as a hostile space that will confine her freedom, though it will give her richness and material security. Hence, she refuses him: "Within, it had been a good deal modernized- some of its best points had lost their purity; but as they saw it from the gardens, a stout grey pile, of the softest, deepest, most weather-fretted hue, rising from a broad, still moat, it affected the young visitor as a castle in a legend" (James, 78).

Isabel Archer could travel away from Garden Court after getting acquainted with Madam Merle, a cheating American woman who gives Isabel the impression that she came from a European background, French and German, to disguise her true character (James, 171-172). Madam Merle hears the news that Mr. Touchett has left Isabel a good fortune, hence she plans to make use of it, and after a short acquaintance, manages to control Isabel, who falls under her magic and agrees to accompany her to visit Greece, Turkey and Egypt. On these tours, Madam Merle knows how to impose her attitudes on innocent Isabel, who describes her as "the product of a different moral and social clime from her own, that she had grown up under other stars" (James, 324).

Madam Merle and Gilbert Osmond, an American expatriate, have a daughter called Pansy born from an illegitimate relationship and have sent her secretly to a convent. They hide this fact and pretend publicly that they are just friends. They regard Isabel as an easy and good catch and begin to plan together to make Isabel marry Osmond. Madam Merle makes a ceaseless effort to convince her to visit Osmond's house in Florence to give her the impression that Osmond is well-educated, from high class and a suitable one to marry. Eventually, under the irresistible impulse, Isabel agrees to visit his house, the house which later would play a great role in determining her choice. She visits his villa one day in May. She describes the outer shape of his villa:

"The villa was a long, rather blank-looking structure, with the far-projecting roof which Tuscany loves and which, on the hills that encircle Florence, when considered from a distance, makes so harmonious a rectangle with straight, dark, definite cypresses that usually rise in groups of three or four beside it" (James, 226).

In fact, Osmond has selected this place to give the impression that he is a descendant of a highborn and aristocratic family, and he follows the high-class standards that the elite class used to preserve. Being portrayed by Isabel, the villa gives the impression that the owner has good taste in selecting places that reflect a well-courteous person. The place for Isabel is designed in an Italian way that provides a luxurious life. She is fascinated by the mystery which the place involves itself with. The front of the villa appears as if it imposes itself on those who see it for the first time and reveals somehow incommunicative character. It is the mask that Osmond hides himself behind giving a splendid architecture that makes an openness to permit the light of afternoon get in with narrow garden tangles of wild roses and old stone benches. Isabel looks at the villa in this way:

"It was the mask, not the face of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way-looked off behind, into splendid openness and the range of the afternoon light. In that quarter the villa overhung the slope of its hill and the long valley of the Arno, hazy with Italian color" (James, 226).

Osmond and Madam Merle represent the European culture of the 19th century that depended on colonialism and exploitation of weaker nations. As Peter High notices that Americans tried to imitate and to be tested by European civilization that they sought to be Europeanized (High, 94). So, no wonder, they find Isabel easy prey to achieve their aims at depriving her of her fortune, exploiting her innocence.

On her second visit to Osmond's villa with Madam Merle, Isabel notices that there is something sad and strong in the place. She is taken by the aura of mystery that covers Osmond's personality, besides his collection of objects like crucifixes, medallions, tapestries and others. These objects are fastidiously selected, appearing to reflect the taste of their owner. Accordingly, Isabel is under the spell of this place, and she thinks that the love of Osmond would grant her endless knowledge. She admires his devotion to his daughter, Pansy, who seems to be the most precious thing to him. The following excerpt shows her second visit and how she is charmed by the place which she feels she cannot go out of it:

"Isabel went with her friend through a wide, high court, where a clear shadow rested below and a pair of light-arched galleries, facing each other above, caught the upper sunshine upon their slim columns and the flowering plants in which they were dressed. There was something grave and strong in the place; it looked somehow as if, once you were in, you would need an act of energy to get out. For Isabel, however, there was of course as yet no thought of getting out, but only of advancing" (James, 253).

The house, then, plays a major role in pushing Isabel to fall into Osmond's trap. She gets married to him despite warnings from her cousin Ralph and her aunt.

Soon, Isabel discovers in a moment of epiphany that she is a victim of both Osmond and Madam Merle. Worse, she discovers that Osmond is trying to make his daughter, Pansy, marry Lord Warburton for his fortune, as he did with Isabel. When she realizes that she has been manipulated by Osmond and Madam Merle, she could not imagine how naïve she was to follow her instinct. She feels sad and dejected, and she needs consolation. Hence, she, one day, walks away from others and finds her feet leading her to the ruins of old Rome. These ruins represent the consoling space where Isabel feels solace and sympathy:

"She had long before this taken old Rome into confidence, for in a world of ruins the ruin of her happiness seemed a less unnatural catastrophe. She rested her weariness upon things that had crumbled for centuries and yet still upright; she dropped her secret sadness into the silence of lonely places, ... so that as she sat in a sun-warmed angle on a winter's day, or stood in a mouldy church to which no one came, she could almost smile at it and think of its smallness. Small it was, in the large Roman record, and her haunting sense of the continuity of the human lot easily carried her from the less to the greater. She had become deeply, tenderly acquainted with Rome: it interfused and moderated her passion" (James, 517-518).

The place is consoling to her fragmented soul at those moments. It condoles her and listens to her silent deep pains, and every part of it seems to be homogenized with her mental state, as if it were weeping silently to her dilemma. She perceives intuitively that there is telepathy between her and this place, as if it were an old friend sharing her agonies and patting her back and making her cry on her/his shoulder.

Space contributes to deepening the relations of people with each other and reflects its domination on them, sometimes revealing the depth of those relations (Kort, 20). Thus, Archer devotes herself to saving poor little Pansy from the plans of her father, who wants to make her marry Lord Warburton, whom she does not love.

Isabel's deep sense of commitment towards Pansy represents the American character in her quest for original innocence, trying to retreat to the dreams of childhood and throwing herself into the first pure upbringing in childhood period, as Birdwell states that only childhood belongs to us while the rest is to strangers. (Birdwell, 1).

III

Space in Saad Kassim Al-Asady's *Deserted Streets*

1. A Note on Saad Kassim Al-Asady's Life and Work

The novelist, Saad Kassim Al-Asady, was born in Baghdad, 1953. In his early boyhood, he developed a strong passion for literature in general, and the novel in particular. What ignited his interest in the novel is his reading of some episodes of *Arabian Nights* when he was just eleven years old. He was charmed by the magical atmosphere of that book, which he read full four years later. Consequently, he became an avid reader of novels, Arabic and European novels translated into Arabic. In an interview with Baghdadi *Azzwra Daily* in 2016, the novelist says when he grew older, he felt himself inclined to share what he read with his friends. He used to re-tell the incidents of a certain novel to them and then they discussed the major themes and characters together. This certainly helped sharpen his critical thinking.

Al-Asady was admitted to the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Baghdad in 1972 as a B.A. student. During his study there, he learned to read the English novel in its original language, and he was influenced by the great English and American novelists and got acquainted with their narrative techniques and character development. His study of the English literature became deeper after his admission to the M.A. study in 1976 and later to the PhD study in the same department.

In his interview with *Azzwra Daily* (2016), Al-Asady says he started writing poems and novels during his B.A. study in the 1970s and they were admired by his classmates and friends, but he did not publish them because he felt they were amateurish, dealing with love relations among young students at a time when revolutionary writings prevailed in Iraq. As he tells the interviewer of *Assbah Daily*, Mohammed Sultan, when he began later writing and publishing novels, he could not abandon the campus as a setting and love relations among students as a theme, making the campus a microcosm in which the academic troubles reflect the larger social conflicts (2016).

Early in the 1980s, Al-Asady worked as an editor and translator in *Baghdad Observer*, an Iraqi daily issued in English where he wrote some articles on various literary issues. Beginning from March 1983, he worked as a teacher of English literature in the English Department, College of Education, University of Mosul, where he taught English poetry and novel for thirteen years, and in 1995 he moved to the Department of English, College of Languages, University of Baghdad to teach English literature (poetry and novel). During those long years, Saad Al-Asady became well-experienced with novel writing, knowing all the secrets of the art of novel writing. Saad Al-Asady published his first novel, *Niran*, in 2014, and it achieved an immediate success at the academic circles and among general readers as well. It was followed by *Dark Clouds* (2015), *A Journey to the Far Side of the Night* (2016), and *The Last Rays of Sunshine* (2017). In all these novels, the campus is the space where most action takes place, but with the later novels, *Ghosts and an Angel* (2018), *Deserted Streets* (2020), *Departure*, (2021), and *Shadows in Extreme Midday Heat* (2022), the critic, Ban Salah Shaalan, says Al-Asady abandons the academic novel and starts to move to various spaces, which he employs to work out his views on the various social and political issues. (Shaalan, 2022)

2. Space in *Deserted Streets*

Deserted Streets depicts the tragic consequences of the terroristic 2006 explosion of the Holy Shrines in Samara, Iraq. In that year, terrorism reached its peak and wreaked havoc on the Iraqi cities, where explosions might happen at any moment killing and wounding hundreds of people at once; gangs of every kind kidnapped innocent people, killed them, and threw the dead bodies in the garbage. Life came to die at midday: markets were shut, governmental offices were closed, streets were deserted, and people were obliged to return home hurriedly for fear of murder. Critic Mohammed S. Qasim describes the novel as a historical document that chronicles the Iraqis' hard lives in that difficult year, 2006, and the social division which happened according to sectarian bases. (Qasim, "Deserted Streets and the Tragedy of 2006")

Deserted Streets concentrates mainly on the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, and the destruction which it undergoes because of the sectarian strife. To present a panoramic view of the social troubles in Baghdad 2006, *Deserted*

Streets employs various spaces that range from the closed buildings such as houses, hospitals and criminals' hiding places to open sites like streets, public squares, and large residential areas. The novel depicts the topography of Baghdad city-space. The physical locations of the Iraqi capital sites are shown as zones where the rival gangs fight with each other for control and dominance. Yet, the novel does not mirror, or attempt mapping, the city terrain. It rather presents a geographical semblance of the city sites using their real names to give a convincing universe for the events.

In *Deserted Streets*, Baghdad, like all postmodern metropolises, is shown as a labyrinth where one cannot find her/his way easily. The lanes, alleys, and sideways in residential areas are all blocked by high concrete walls; only one is left open. Thus, one may go walking in a certain lane, halfway s/he suddenly finds it closed by concrete blocks, and s/he has to go back to try other lanes. S/he may try several lanes to find the way out of the maze. At night, darkness prevails because of the continual electricity cut off, hence fear of thieves or gunmen spreads. Even at daylight most people keep themselves at home and no one ventures to go out for fear of explosions. That is why amusement disappears, and its places are deserted. In general, Baghdad in *Deserted Streets*, like New York in Paul Auster's *Ghosts*, appears as "the most forlorn of places" (Auster, 94), full of garbage and ruin.

In *Deserted Streets*, most open spaces appear antagonistic and hostile, representing danger and evil. They are places where lawlessness and crime are rampant, devastating all aspects of life. From the beginning of the novel, sitting in Al-Tayaran Squire, a public place in Baghdad city center, Majid, the protagonist, shows clear anxiety and fear expecting an explosion to happen and end his life immediately. Hence, he dreams of a job that may take him away from this dangerous place. When he meets his old friend, Mehdi, he begs him to help him find such a job: "Please Mehdi, I'm unemployed ... spending my days here like a vagabond. I don't know when a terrorist explosion happens and kills me. If you help me find an honest job, I'll be thankful." (*Deserted Streets*, 9)

The most important open space that shows the hostile nightmarish nature of public spaces is the street. In the absence of an active, powerful police force, the streets are shown as an arena where the gangsters find full freedom to carry out their crimes and terrify people. At noon they are empty of pedestrians and automobiles as well. The people keep themselves at home, fearing to venture out. Here is the description of Sadoon Street, a main street in downtown Baghdad, at night: "The car passed through Sadoon Street, which was dark and desolate. The garbage flies out here and there in it like lost spirits searching for their resting place. It looked like a wasteland, deserted by life and inhabited by death. I didn't see any trace of human beings...." (*Deserted Streets*, 19)

The best scene that shows the frightening aspects of the streets, in the novel, is the gangsters' pursuit of Majid and Basima (the heroine) through the vacant streets in which even little birds hide themselves for fear of death. The criminals relentlessly chase the two protagonists: gunshots are exchanged, yells of horror are heard, loud commotion happens at the gates of houses, yet no one goes out to see what is happening because people are crippled by fear. One of the streets in which the pursuit runs hot is described as completely "desolate in which all the houses are soundless and closed, and all signs of life have disappeared as if it were inhabited by ghosts." (124-126) Significantly, the streets are not only empty of civilians but also no sign of any police force is seen in them, a fact which emphasizes the absence of law and the prevalence of outlawry and crime.

The large residential areas represent another open space with peculiar aspects. Some appear friendly while others appear hostile. In response to a question through *WhatsApp*, the novelist, Saad Al-Asady, asserts that the significance of residential areas in *Deserted Streets* should be understood through contrast. (SMS, April 9, 2025) There are two main neighborhoods in the novel: Al-Kasra and Al-Batawin. Al-Kasra is an old neighborhood characterized by its small houses which are very close to each other, inhabited by people who are very intimate to each other because they have known each other for a long time. Its lanes are too narrow to allow the automobiles to pass through. The novel describes it as "a poor people neighborhood" in which "the folk market is crowded with people most hours of the day." (91) Feeling safe in it, the protagonist finds it very suitable to hide from the gangsters. It represents a friendly space of protection and security. In contrast, Al-Batawin is a neighborhood characterized by new high buildings that comprise flats where people unknown to each other live. Hence it becomes a suitable hiding place for criminals and outlaws. It is a good example of the hostile space in which fear controls its atmosphere. It is described as "a neighborhood of vice" (145). In a memorable scene, Basima, while trying to save Majid from the claws of the gangsters, depicts it in this way: I ran in the empty lane looking for impossible help. Midday had not arrived yet

and the lanes of this vicious neighborhood were deserted. I cried at the top of my

voice "help me; help me," but no one was out to respond. It is a damned neighborhood of ghosts, owned by vice... I felt there were eyes hiding behind the window curtains watching me but no one had the guts to interfere or even go out to see what was going on in the deserted lane. (145)

In *Deserted Streets*, the house is a domestic space where one finds protection, love, and moral strength. It is the home that houses the family members and binds them together. For instance, Basima feels safe and happy at home with the presence of her loving father, who undertakes the task of teaching her lessons and protecting her from dangers. Only when she loses home that she becomes insecure and vulnerable. Likewise, Lamia, another female protagonist, lives happy and secure with her family at home. She remembers her childhood when her father used to bring her kids' magazines to read and later in her life novels to educate herself. He helps her be brave and mature early in her life as if to prepare her to stand strong in facing the coming difficulties of life. Both Basima and Lamia remember their homes with nostalgic yearning.

Other buildings, in *Deserted Streets*, like the hospital and the gangsters' den should be contrasted together, as the novelist says in his SMS on April 9, 2025. Traditionally, the hospital is a place of care and cure, but, in *Deserted Street*, it is more than that. It is the place where the injured survivors of the daily terroristic explosions are seen. The large halls of the hospital are full of them, and the doctors and nurses work hard among blood and pain to soften suffering. Thus, the hospital is a space of consolation, a symbol of humanitarian sympathies and compassion, an outcry against terrorism, evidence of the heinous crimes of terrorists against innocent civilians. After an explosion, for example, Lamia, a nurse in Al-Karkh hospital, comes to her room to find Majid waiting for her. He depicts her condition:

She came with her white clothes stained with blood. She was weeping silently. When she entered the room, I saw pain speaking in her sad face and weeping eyes. She whispered as if talking to herself "when'll this daily butchering of innocent people come to an end?" She wiped out her tears and said "if you had seen the amputated limbs, the distorted bodies, the blinded eyes, and the big numbers of deaths, you'd have been struck with despair (73).

In contrast, the hiding place of gangsters is presented as a hostile space where the gangsters plan and practice their criminal acts. They work under the cover of a humanitarian organization to help the poor restore their rights from the rich and powerful. Their public office is only a camouflage to hide their true aims. From the outside, the building is very smart, displaying a large label announcing its name, but inside, it has a small room where prisoners and kidnapped persons are detained and tortured. It has all means of torment: chains, whips, electric wires for electrical shocks, a fan to tie the victims to, etc. Here is a delineation of Majid's torture inside that room:

They stripped Majid off his clothes and left him naked in his underwear despite December's cold. Then they tied him to the fan and started to whip him hard on his back, hands, and legs until deep red stripes were formed in his body like furrows in farming land. Shortly afterward, he was untied and made sit at an iron rough chair and Haji, [the gangsters' leader], boxed him hard... The evil men started to beat Majid, one boxed him, another kicked him, and still another slapped him... They were enjoying torturing him as if they were enjoying a delicious dinner Haji had invited them to.... (142-143)

In this way, space in *Deserted Streets* is employed to enhance the theme of the novel, which focuses on the spread of terrorism and crime in the Iraqi capital during the year 2006. It also contributes to the development of action. By choosing various sites in south, north, west, and east Baghdad, the novel presents a panoramic view of the geographic extension of crime. This view is supported by using multiple narrators which, the critic Mohammed Saad Qasim says, helps readers see the action through many lenses for objectivity (Qasim, "The Technique of Multiple Narration in *Deserted Streets*").

IV

Conclusion

Space plays an important role in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Saad Kassim Al-Asady's *Deserted Streets*. In both novels, space appears in a variety of forms such as houses, villas, neighborhoods, hospitals, cities, etc. Each of these forms is used to convey certain feelings or meanings that enhance the theme of the novel and contribute to the development of its action.

Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* presents various sites that extend over two continents: America and Europe. It starts with a space in Albany, New York to move to a space in London, Britain and then to spaces

in Rome, Italy. This large geographical area helps present a variety of spaces from the domestic, hostile, historical, to the consoling spaces.

Isabel's small house in Albany, New York is a domestic space, in which she gets her ideas and forms her attitudes from books. Thus, it reflects her naivety and lack of practical experience. Her movement to England provides another space, the English manor with its traditions of afternoon tea and parties. Isabel does not find herself in this place and she refuses an offer of marriage by the wealthy Baron Warburton. His villa plays a role in her refusal of him as a suitor. Its original design is distorted by modern changes which show distaste. This convinces Isabel that the baron has money but not the romantic liberality which she dreams of. The villa represents a hostile space.

Isabel's friendship with Madam Merle provides her with an opportunity to travel to Italy which has an ancient historical depth. Rome is a real museum that presents spaces that have their psychological effects on Isabel. Two spaces are significant in this respect. The first is Osmond's house. Isabel is struck by its atmosphere of mystery. It is filled with collections of various objects like crucifixes, medallions, tapestries and other artistic works. All these have their effect on Isabel, who is captured by the mystery of the house and its ancient ornaments, hence she accepts the offer of marriage presented by Osmond.

The second space in Italy is the Roman Ruins. Isabel, who is shocked and frustrated by Osmond's and Madam Merle's deception of her, feels lonely and finds a strong desire to go away from human company, therefore she goes out rambling alone to find herself among the Roman ruins. This space with its historicity has a consoling effect on her. She finds an affinity between herself as a ruined woman and this ancient, ruined city. She drops her sadness into the silence of this lonely place and feels that it shares sorrows with her.

Unlike the sprawling *The Portrait of a Lady*, the space in Saad Kassim Al-Asady's *Deserted Streets* is mainly limited to Baghdad city sites in the year 2006. Baghdad itself appears as a hostile space. With the sudden terroristic explosions that destruct its public sites, with its dark nights due to constant electricity cut off, and with dominance of criminals and disappearance of the police, it becomes a frightening inimical space where citizens find no haven but their houses which they close well. The hostility of the city can best be seen in its streets. These streets always become empty at midday because people desert them and go home for fear of crime.

Like *The Portrait of a Lady*, *Deserted Streets* show so many locations that present themselves as domestic, friendly and consoling, while some others appear hostile and inimical. The house is a domestic, friendly space. It is the shelter where the protagonists find love and protection in childhood, hence it lives in their minds as a dear memory which they always yearn for when they grow up. In the same way, Al-Kasra neighborhood is a friendly space. With its narrow lanes that do not allow vehicles to pass through, and with its close houses in which families know each other, it becomes a shelter where Majid, the protagonist, finds safety and protection from the attacks of the criminals. On the opposite side, Al-Batawin neighborhood represents a hostile space. It is a modernized place where criminals find a good hiding place because the inhabitants do not know each other, and they live for themselves. Consequently, they fear and suspect each other. The neighborhood is always referred to as vicious and corrupt.

The hospital is a consoling space. It offers care and sympathy for the wounded victims of the terroristic attacks. With its humanitarian mission, it becomes a symbol of human compassion and solidarity against the crimes of terrorists. In contrast, the gangsters' hiding place is a hostile space. The building may appear smart and attractive from the outside but inside it is a horrible site in which heinous practices of torture go on.

In this way, Henry James in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Saad Kassim Al-Asady in *Deserted Streets* show evident concern for space and its significance in revealing psychological insights and social issues. Through a variety of spaces, they succeed in showing how space can interact with human character and shape her/his attitudes.

Appendix

Dear Professor Saad K. Al-Asadi,

I am writing on space in your novel, *Deserted Streets*, please, can you tell me whether your presentation of space comes within a certain pattern. What is it, especially concerning the residential areas and the buildings or houses.

Dear Mr. Muzahim,

Good evening.

Concerning space in *Deserted Streets*, I would like to say there is an implied pattern that you should notice. I tried to present residential areas through contrast. For instance, Al-Kasra neighborhood, which is an old area, where houses are small and attached to each other and lanes are narrow and do not allow cars of strangers to pass through arouses of safety and security. In contrast, Al-Batawin neighborhood is an area of high buildings of several storeys where people live in flats shut to others. People are unknown to each other and there is no socialization among them. Thus the neighborhood appears hostile, representing a threat to the passerby and arousing fear. The same can be said about houses or individual buildings. Two examples should be noticed: The hospital and the gang hideout. The first is friendly, a place of cure, while the second is inimical, a place of torture and murder.

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