

Bearing Witness to Becoming: Deleuzian Nomadism and the Palestinian Experience in *Tasting the Sky*

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Met'eb A. Alnwairan
Zarqa University, Jordan

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Abstract: This paper examines Deleuzian nomadism and its role in understanding the Palestinian experience as reflected in Ibtisam Barakat's *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* (2007). The article draws on key Deleuzian concepts, including rhizomatic narratives, fluid identities, and deterritorialization. While Barakat's novel focuses on childhood experiences in Ramallah during the Israeli occupation, the lens of Deleuzian nomadism that this study applies helps unveil the intricate ways in which Palestinian identity evolves amidst political conflict. The study shows how the memoir's non-linear storytelling, aspects of fluidity, and deterritorialization create an immersive experience for the readers, allowing them to explore the complexities of community life and break free from fixed structures and established hierarchies. By engaging with Deleuzian concepts, the reader gains a richer understanding of the Palestinian experience, one that recognizes the crucial role of fluidity, resistance, and diverse cultural narratives in shaping Palestinian identity.

Keywords: Deleuze, deterritorialization, fluid identities, Ibtisam Barakat, nomadism, rhizomatic narratives

1. Introduction

The study of Palestinian literature has been a rich site for exploring controversial issues such as displacement, resistance, and cultural identity. In this unique literary body of human exploration, Palestinian fiction writing has provided endless insights and commentaries about the complex intertwining of culture, identity, and resistance in the face of social and political turmoil. For the purpose of this study, *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* by the Palestinian American Ibtisam Barakat will be examined. A unique aspect of her work is that it makes an unbiased narrative that takes us to the everyday life struggles of Palestinians during a bitter period of their history. The author experienced the drastic consequences of displacement and violence as a child and consequently presented a memoir that blends personal accounts of a torn childhood as well as the collective suffering of her people.

Barakat builds a backdrop for her memoir inspired by the collective Palestinian experience of displacement, loss, survival, and cultural endurance. As we read the memoir, it becomes clear that the author makes the narrative a vehicle to explore the most complex and problematic sides of the Palestinian identity. What Barakat offers the reader in the narrative is a vivid autobiography that is unfolded

against the backdrop of the ever-shifting sands of socio-political dynamics and the interweaving threads of personal and collective memory.

The significance of *Tasting the Sky* lies in the fact that the memoir raises essential questions about the essence of the Palestinian question and dilemma. Moreover, the significance of this work can be extended beyond its Palestinian context; it can also serve as an intellectual commentary on human identity and the general enduring impact of displacement on identity. This study makes use of Deleuzian nomadic philosophy, aiming to uncover profound insights into the dynamic interplay between identity, displacement, and narrative construction. The application of Deleuzian nomadism helps us elucidate how Barakat's narrative both reflects and subverts conventional notions of identity formation and belonging. Doing so, the research endeavors to offer an unconventional understanding of how the author navigates the complexities of displacement and loss. To reach that end, the major focus will be directed toward the parts that reflect on identity fluidity, the rhizomatic nature of storytelling, and the deterritorialization of a community under occupation.

By inviting Deleuzian philosophy into Barakat's masterful narrative, my study aims to forge a connection between literature and practical human experience, on the one hand, and abstract philosophy and theory, on the other hand. I argue that this combination can present a novel perspective into how Deleuzian nomadism creates a conceptual lens for both appreciating and comprehending the complexities of Palestinian identity in a literary context. This perspective enables us to transform the memoir into a point of convergence—a middle ground where human personal experiences are evaluated or rather sensed via illuminating theoretical frameworks. This process is intended to uncover social accounts of adaptability and self-redefinition. The analysis this study presents brings to the front the unique manifestations of Palestinian identity within Barakat's memoir and enriches the broader discourse on the intersections of literature, society, and theoretical frameworks.

2. Literature review

2.1 Nomadism and literature

Gilles Deleuze's contributions to literary analysis enable us to transcend traditional boundaries and analyze literature. Employing Deleuzian nomadism, for instance, enriches literary interpretation by destabilizing fixed structures and emphasizing the new horizons that fluidity, rhizomatic thinking, and deterritorialization can offer. The literature review hereinafter delves into some innovative insights relevant to the critical association of Deleuzian philosophy in general and his nomadism in particular. The focus will be on how nomadism is applied in narrative structures and how it uniquely represents cultural identities.

In an insightful exploration of Gish Jen's *Mona in the Promised Land*, Chung-Hsiung Lai (2010) utilizes Deleuzian nomadism to comment on the paradoxical desires of Chinese American characters. Through the notion of nomadic desire, Lai sheds light on how these individuals struggle against life paradoxes like assimilation and resistance. Lai asserts that the nomadic experiences

in Jen's novel create a homeland that is not confined to one particular location, space, or geographic location but with endless movement from one location to another.

Pandžić (2016) explores the concept of Deleuzian nomadism as a philosophical and literary lens for analyzing the works of some prominent post-Yugoslav fiction writers. Pandžić argues that the characters in the works she analyzed are overly non-rooted, lacking determination, and have strong resistance to commitment. Due to their emotional and physical instability, these characters, as Pandžić explains, become more critical to collective identities, seeking a fluid identity through nomadic existence instead. As a consequence of this nomadic being, the characters tend to challenge territorially bound traditions and national identities. This analysis, as Pandžić points out, challenges the traditional perspectives about identity as fixed and static.

In an effort to trace nomadism stances in Persian literature, Zaheri (2016) offers new insights into nomadism through his analysis of the novel *Kalidar*. Zaheri explains that the narrative shows how Gol Mohammad, the protagonist in the novel, undergoes a profound self-transformation due to numerous factors that re/shapes his identity. As the actions of the narrative unfold, Gol Mohammad finds himself facing a choice between dignified death and surrender. As he chooses the former, Zaheri concludes, the protagonist goes through a transformative shift that ended with him "transforming from being to becoming" (p. 72). Zaheri's analysis of the novel shows how Deleuzian nomadism reproduces the concept of "becoming" as opposed to "being". This can be seen when Gol Mohammad rejects his static condition (life) and moves toward what can be seen a continuous process of becoming (death). This aspect of the novel is a clear match to the idea that the nomad is always capable of transformation and change in a way that keeps him/her in an ever-evolving state of becoming.

Özbay (2020) explores Paul Auster's novel *Sunset Park* in an attempt to delve into the representations and the complexities of "the psychological world of mobile postmodern individual" (p. 252). In his analysis, Özbay argues that one of the major issues the novel discusses is the problematic nature of the mental and physical mobility of the postmodern American individual. Özbay's analysis shows how Auster's characters perfectly fit in Deleuzian nomadic thought. The physical journeys the characters go through reveal a mode of resistance to traditional social norms, on the one hand, and desire for liberation, on the other. Özbay concludes by asserting that by examining Auster's characters through Deleuzian nomadism, the reader acquires clearer understanding of the complexities of the identity of the postmodern individual.

A notable recent addition to the literature is the study by Rabbani (2023). Rabbani chooses Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* as a site for exploring the postmodern nomadic epistemologies and gendered dimensions of nomadism. Rabbani's discussion is based on philosophical nomadism as presented in Deleuze and Guattari (2010), and Braidotti (1994). Rabbani argues that Shamsie's protagonist embodies a nomadic perspective, similar to the ideas of Deleuze, Guattari, and Braidotti. This nomadic perspective challenges the traditional focus

on linear timelines in storytelling and prompts a reevaluation of how nationalism is portrayed in the narratives of second-generation Pakistani writers. Shamsie's narrative, as Rabbani points out, "reiterates the need to comprehend female nomadic subjectivity in all its multifariousness and complexity" (p. 1) by tracing the protagonist's tendency to question various rigid societal expectations placed upon her mainly by the influence of gender and national identity.

2.2 *Tasting the Sky* and questions of belonging, and identity

Needless to say, Palestinian literature has always been a rich site for exploring themes of displacement, belonging, and identity. Previous scholarly works on *Tasting the Sky* have explored the novel's tendency to address the impact of historical and political turmoil on literary expressions. For example, Yusof et al. (2012) offer a fresh take on Barakat's writings and the tragic experiences of displacement and loss she presents in her memoir. The study shows how Palestinian diasporic writers navigate the realms of forgetting and remembering and examine the internal conflict of an individual striving to reconcile the past with the present. The study concludes by noting that loss and displacement can trigger a creative power, as Barakat's lost home "is not only recollected in the memories of the child that she was, but it is also regenerated in the imaginary landscape of her narrative" (p. 102).

Al-Rikabi (2016) further supports the ideas presented in Yusof et al. (2012) study. In her discussion of displacement of home and identity in Palestinian-American fiction, Al-Rikabi offers an interesting analysis of how writers handle complex issues and themes like displacement and identity through their writings. Al-Rikabi argues that Palestinian-American fiction writers, like Barakat, face a multifaceted struggle. They grapple with the loss of their physical homeland on one hand, and the challenges of maintaining their sense of self upon emigrating to the US on the other. According to Al-Rikabi's viewpoint, this personal dilemma stimulates those writers to seek a restored identity and understanding of home that fuses their Palestinian and American identities. The study concludes by referring to writing as a tool to recreate the lost home and identity in a way that gives voice to silenced and oppressed people.

Savsar (2018) approaches Barakat's memoir from a distinct angle, examining how child characters within her work, along with those in other texts explored, symbolize colonized nations reliant on parental figures as metaphors for colonizing powers. Barakat's narrative, according to Savsar, foregrounds the struggles of the child protagonists as they move from marginalization and repression toward self-discovery and agency. As a defense mechanism, oppressed individuals depend on recalling and retelling earlier fragments and traces of the past, a process which, in turn, recreates their agencies and forms new identities.

Alnwairan and Al-Jarrah (2022) explore the concept of "feminine memory" and its role in reshaping Palestinian history in Barakat's memoir. The authors apply a postcolonial perspective and build on Fatma Kassem's (2011) research on Palestinian women's oral narratives to show how Barakat's narrative goes beyond merely reflecting history. Their study unravels how trauma impacts both memory

and storytelling, shaping a “healing narrative” that confronts individual and collective suffering. In their research, Alnwairan and Al-Jarrah put the “feminine memory” under focus and show how this memory is influenced by the domestic sphere, the female body, and the female language (p. 15). Instead of simply representing reality, these three interconnected memory elements piece together history from traumatic memories instead of merely representing reality.

Considering the previous literature, we can be confident that nomadism offers a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of postmodern identity and belonging. By emphasizing the manifestations of fluidity, ambiguity, and resistance to fixed definitions, Deleuzian nomadism challenges us to reconsider our perception of traditional notions of identity and embrace new possibilities of a more open-ended and dynamic identity/world. Examining Palestinian narratives through Deleuzian nomadism, this study explores how nomadism can offer a fresh perspective on Palestinian identity and struggle.

3. Theoretical framework

This study draws upon Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of nomadology as a theoretical framework for understanding identity, narratives, and cultural formations. In their influential book *A Thousand Plateaus* (first published in 1980) Deleuze and Guattari present nomadism as a mode of “becoming, heterogeneity, infinitesimal, passage to the limit, continuous variation” (p. 363). The authors explain that this mode of existence often challenges traditional static and passive modes of human existence. On other words, nomadism favors mobility over immobility, and, as a consequence, prioritizes, rhizomatic thinking, fluid identities, and the rejection of fixed structures. This perspective in handling the issues of identity and becoming provides a lens for deeper exploration of the multifaceted nature of human experiences. Our focus on this study will be concerned with three major concepts taken from nomadology: The concepts of rhizomatic narratives, fluid identities, and deterritorialization. In the context of literary interpretation, these concepts reshape traditional narrative structures and emphasize the unique nature of human agency and identity.

One of the revolutionary insights of Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadism is that it encourages the reader to reconsider the traditional perception of linear narratives by introducing the concept of the rhizome. The rhizome, as explained in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004), is a term that refers to numerous and complex networks of relationships without a fixed beginning or end. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari challenge the classic notion of linearity and hierarchy by using the analogy of the rhizome pointing out that “there are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root” (p. 8). Similar to an offshoot of a plant which usually sends out numerous roots and shoots from its nodes, the rhizome as a conception is non-linear and subject to haphazard deviations. When applied to literature, rhizomatic narratives resist chronological and hierarchical storytelling, offering interconnected and non-linear narratives. This concept will be used in this study to navigate multiple paths within Barakat’s memoir, which consequently, creates a dynamic and “fluid” reading experience.

The second notion that this study borrows from nomadism is fluid identities. Nomadism, in a broad sense, has always been connected with the idea of mobility and movement from one geographical place to another. Historically, the idea of nomadism comes to the forefront when individuals feel that their basic desires or needs cannot be fulfilled in their present inhabitation. As a consequence, they develop a tendency to be more flexible and willing to move. Inspired by that notion, nomadology refers to the emergence “of a new postmodern mode of existence where individuals overcome repressive modern forms of identity and stasis to become desiring nomads in a constant process of becoming and transformation” (Best and Kellner 1991: 77). Based on that sense, nomadism considers postmodern identities as non-fixed entities, or at least processes of becoming. For the purpose of this study, the concept of fluid identities will be used to explore characters’ constant transformations over time and their will to resist political and social categorizations that reduce their agency. The current study invests these ideas to illustrate how the postmodern individuals in a narrative develop unique dynamic entities that are constantly evolving in response to the changing experiences of their lives.

A most insightful reading of nomadism is that by Ronald Bogue (1989) in his examination of Deleuze and Guattari. Bogue develops the idea of the nomad further as “a point of pure intensity traversing the grid of the body without organs, a mobile locus of becoming commingling identities as it migrates from desiring-machine to desiring-machine” (p. 95). This perspective emphasizes the fluidity and continuous transformation intrinsic to the nomad subject, embodying “a process of becoming other, becoming plant, animal, mineral, becoming ‘races, cultures, and their gods’” (p. 95). Such a description sits well with the broad themes of nomadology, under which reality is dynamic—constantly changing—and fixed structures are repudiated. This theoretical lens is crucial in the analysis of Barakat’s memoir and as it allows a nuanced reading of the characters’ constant transformation and their resistance to political and social categorizations.

Eugène W. Holland (1999) and Iain Chambers (1994) build on Deleuze and Guattari’s perspectives and discuss nomadism as transformation within capitalist societies. Holland declares that “deterritorialization and reterritorialization through axiomatization constitute one of the fundamental rhythms of capitalist society” (Holland 1999: 20). He adds that in such scenarios, human resources and labor are liberated and reattached anew, establishing the complex dynamics that characterizes nomadic existence. Chambers, on the other hand, challenges the notion of fixed identities and underscores the importance of fluidity and perpetual becoming emphasizing that “identity is formed at the unstable point where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture” (Chambers 1994: 25). The perspectives Holland and Chambers present, support the views that see nomadism as opposite to structures—static and hierarchic—that undergo a lively process of becoming and transformation. This awareness enhances our understanding of the nature of identity fluidity the characters experience in Barakat’s memoir. Moreover, it helps us understand the characters’ endless evolution and transformation in their shifting socio-political landscape.

Deterritorialization is the last term the study utilizes from nomadism. This term refers to, in addition to the obvious notion of “moving” from one territory to another, decomposing the established territories and boundaries, both physical and spiritual. In the case of deterritorialization, according to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), *territories*, or social relations, experience a mode of mutation that gradually and continuously changes their existing organization. Hitchcock (2008) points out that “deterritorialization is desire as flow; it opens up possibility of multiple ways and directions at once, regardless of socially sanctioned boundaries that only seek to domesticate the flow of desire” (p. 110). In the current discussion of nomadism in Barakat’s narrative, deterritorialization examines how the narrative exposes the fierce decomposing of established norms and structures. In the context of *Tasting the Sky*, deterritorialization is seen through individuals navigating the shifting boundaries of their political, cultural, and geographic environments.

4. Discussion

Analyzing *Tasting the Sky* through Deleuzian nomadism reveals how Barakat’s memoir captures the complexities of the Palestinian experience through three dimensions: rhizomatic narratives, fluid identities, and deterritorialization.

4.1 Rhizomatic narratives

Handling the rhizomatic structure that Barakat creates in her memoir emerges as a major connection to nomadism, redefining the traditional structure of fiction narratives. The mode of narration that Barakat chooses for her memoir takes the reader through a non-linear flow of events, ideas, and perspectives. One way to think about this choice is that Barakat invests the rhizomatic narrative to reflect the interconnectedness between her protagonist’s individual experience and the broader Palestinian experience. In this mode of narration, stories complete one another, and at the same time, resist any linear or singular interpretation. To achieve this end, the rhizomatic structure Barakat weaves into her narrative invites multiplicities of voices with various standpoints in a way that reflects the diverse perspectives within the Palestinian experience. The narrative under study presents a mosaic of individual, familial, and communal voices that offer a lively portrayal of human struggle.

In Part 1 of the memoir, titled “A Letter to No One,” Barakat recalls incidents from her teen years in Ramallah while she returns to her early childhood memories in Part 2 of the memoir. In a way, Barakat shatters the traditional storytelling mold, opting for a non-linear “dance” between past and present. Barakat does not just tell a story, but rather she throws the reader into the heart of the narrative right from the very beginning of the novel as she writes:

“I’m midway from Birzeit to Ramallah, at the Israeli army checkpoint at Surda. No one knows how long our bus will stay here. An army jeep is parked sideways to block the road. Soldiers in another jeep look on with their guns” (Barakat 2007: 1).

Abandoning the conventional linear narrative format, Barakat takes us to a non-linear world, a world stuck between her high school experiences and memories

from her early childhood. This seemingly chaotic approach, I argue, is a manifestation of the nomadic notion in postmodern writings that reflects the fragmentation of the individual identity under oppression. The traumatic experiences, similar to what Barakat introduces in her memoir, often disrupt the linear flow of memory. This back-and-forth movement she employs in the narrative raises questions about how past events shaped her present realities (Alnwairan and Al-Jarrah 2022).

The rhizomatic narrative Barakat uses manifests the interconnectedness of experience and memory, defying oversimplified linear timelines and embracing the ever-shifting nature of human identity. In the case of *Tasting the Sky*, there is no clear division between what we consider a beginning, middle, or end. Using rhizomatic relations between historical events, the memoir initiates the dance between past and present which results in a new understanding of how the individual's childhood experiences continue to re/shape reactions and perspectives over time. In the memoir, the flashbacks of the brutality she faced as a teen at the checkpoints near Ramallah echo other traumatic experiences from her childhood, creating a sense of alienation in a system with no easy escape. This rhizomatic structure is masterfully invested in the narrative to reflect the complexities individuals face under occupation, refuting traditional linear narratives and oversimplified narratives of good versus evil.

Another aspect of the rhizomatic narrative in Barakat is the shift to a universal voice in the third part of her memoir. The narrator abandons the individual perspective or voice and, instead, embraces an organic, interdependent spirit of rhizomatic storytelling:

Dear everyone: Written on my heart, all that I lost—my shoes, a donkey friend, a city, the skin of my feet, a goat, my home, my childhood—shattered at the hands of history. But my eternal friend Alef helps me find the splinters of my life [...] and piece them back together (Barakat 2007: 122-23).

The transformation of the blurred boundaries between past and present, personal, and universal, negates the individual narrative on the one hand and invites readers to connect through shared experiences on the other hand. The memory fragmentations about things like “shoes”, “home” and “a donkey friend,” resemble the rhizome's structure, where meaning arises from the interconnectedness of diverse elements. Yet, amidst the struggle to reassemble the past, Barakat pieces her life back together with the help of her “eternal friend” Alef; the letter A in Arabic alphabet. This desire reflects a rhizomatic behavior that uses language to seek new connections and transformations. Barakat, through making a connection between the personal and universal, reflects on the constant journey of remembering, healing, and fostering connection. It is an open invitation to the readers to participate in a “collective” exploration of the shared human memory and the complexity and non-linearity of personal histories.

The rhizomatic narrative Barakat uses challenges the traditional “one hero story” often seen in stories of struggle and liberation. The rhizomatic dimension in Barakat's narrative is not limited to the chronology or the audience she addresses

but rather the narrative invites other narrators or witnesses to add new layers and perspectives to the main narrative. In addition to Barakat's voice, the father is another important contributor to the narrative. In numerous occasions, the reader experiences events through the eyes of a father exhausted by war and poverty. Barakat tells how her father had nightmares after the war:

every night I run to comfort him. I bring him a cup of water and sit beside him. I ask him to tell me what he sees. Catching his breath, he mixes words and tears. My father has no language for the pain and loneliness he feels (Barakat 2007: 13).

This narrative style contributes to Barakat's masterful weaving of multiple voices and perspectives into her narrative. The father's painful silence speaks volumes, reflecting the broader collective suffering of people in the narrative.

Moreover, Barakat gives female characters their own voice in her memoir, adding yet another layer to the mosaic of narratives included in the book. In the memoir, events are occasionally told or reported from the perspectives of female characters around Barakat, like her mother and Hamamah. During their stay in a refugee camp in Jordan, women formed ties and connections while discussing shared topics:

It was said, and repeated, that children nursed by the same woman would instantly become siblings and must never marry [...]. But Mother gained a sister of her own—Hamameh, the driver's wife.

The two women agreed that if the war lasted a long time and their husbands did not return, they would help each other through whatever followed (Barakat 2007: 33).

These communal acts of shared activities like taking care of infants, as well as the creation of a sisterhood between Barakat's mother and Hamameh transcend the linear/individual perspective into a more fluid perspective that mimics the rhizome's organic growth. By mingling new voices and relationships in the narrative, Barakat invites the reader to dispose of monolithic "truths" and replace them with the multifaceted reality of the individual memory and identity. This understanding is tightly integrated in Deleuzian nomadism that offers an opportunity to depart from fixed structures and established hierarchies. This aspect in Barakat's memoir reminds us that authentic understanding comes from embracing the complex, interconnected web of human experiences rather than relying on a single point of view. Ultimately, Barakat's mosaic of voices she introduces in the memoir invites us to consider human struggle through a multitude of raw emotions and unspoken stories of those who live harsh realities.

4.2 Fluid identities

The exploration of nomadism and fluid identities in *Tasting the Sky* unveils a dynamic process of becoming that goes in line with what Deleuze proposes in his philosophy. A careful look into the memoir shows how Barakat successfully portrays the character of a child struggling to adapt to cultural and political transformations, which, in a way, reflects the self-inherent fluidity in the Palestinian experience. Barakat's memoir emphasizes the resilience of the protagonist's

identity in the face of external pressures in a way that considers identity not as a fixed entity, but as an ongoing negotiation, a continuous stream adapting to its surroundings.

In the memoir, Barakat occasionally refers to her feeling of being transformed, changed, and destabilized. In part 3 of the memoir, she declares: "I am midway from forgetting to remembering. I do not know how long it will take before I return to all of myself" (Barakat 2007: 169). Barakat's "midway" state embodies the dynamic spirit of Deleuze's nomadism. Stuck between the two opposing forces of forgetting and remembering, Barakat's narrative shakes the illusion of a fixed self, presenting to the reader a more convincing flexible identity. This perspective about identity aligns with the questions nomadism raises before the traditional understanding of the self as a rigid and fixed entity. This belief supports postmodern ideas about the constant movement, change, and transformation inherent in who we are. The uncertainty of "returning" in the quote alludes to the fact that just like a nomad, the speaker is in a constant state of movement that does not necessarily have a destination. Therefore, identity becomes "a journey" molded by the endless internal and external encounters individuals face. The tension created between forgetting and remembering is considered identical to what Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 22) call "lines of flight". According to Deleuze and Guattari (2004), when individuals face external pressures, they tend to establish new paths in response. In Barakat's case, remembering is a possible "line of flight" that can be used to reclaim a lost sense of self: "I do not know how long it will take before I return to all of myself [...] I will never regret that I chose to remember (Barakat 2007: 169). By writing her memoir, Barakat chooses to remember. She reflects on what happened to her as a child, and, as a consequence, this ongoing process of remembering will give more power to the journey her identity is undertaking.

Barakat refers to the ongoing internal conflict that re/shapes her identity in numerous occasions in the memoir. Needless to say, the military conflict Barakat lived through is a major source for the internal anguish she experienced. Barakat tells how her mother describes the effects war has on the human psyche, "When a war ends, it does not go away [. . .] it hides inside us" (Barakat 207: 14). However, in the absence of external freedom in Ramallah, Barakat declares that she has her own freedom, "it is hidden in Post Office Box 34. This is what takes me from Ramallah to Birzeit" (Barakat 9). What Barakat does here is that she defies the surveillance of Israeli authorities in Ramallah by claiming a figurative freedom, hidden away in a post office, referring to her penpalling hobby. This aspect of Barakat's life leads to a secret world, inaccessible to external forces, that nurtures a parallel identity with more ability to express and influence. Post Office Box 34 becomes more than a physical space for the teen Barakat; it represents a spiritual space where identity can develop, evolve, and transform its existence. Barakat declares: "Paper and ink, poems and my postbox are medicines that heal the wounds of a life without freedom" (p. 9). Through the chapters of her memoir, Barakat paints a dynamic portrait of identity, where past moments do not simply reside as static fragments, but actively participate in the endless journey of identity

formation. This journey or fluidity results in a constant process of identity re/shaping.

To emphasize, a central aspect Barakat's memoir has in relation to Deleuze's philosophy of fluidity is how Barakat transforms the act of writing into a powerful "line of flight" as she tries to grasp the nature of her ever-changing identity. Each word the protagonist writes becomes a step on a nomadic journey of the self, summoning fading fragments of her past and piecing them together into a dynamic, evolving new self. This resonates with Deleuze's nomadism, where individuals create new "ways out" in response to external pressures. For Barakat, the letter Alef becomes her weapon, attaching memories to the page and, as a result, creating a space for healing and transformation. In short, this unique "line of flight" Barakat establishes transcends the page beyond its conventional meaning. It demonstrates the enduring power of words that can liberate us. The memoir makes it clear that writing is not just a passive or static act, but a clear testament of the continuous journey of becoming and the negotiation of dual identities.

4.3 Deterritorialization

The exploration of fluid identities and the concept of becoming discussed in the preceding section naturally pave the way to delve deeper into the profound concept of "deterritorialization" introduced by Deleuze in his philosophy of nomadism. According to Deleuze (2010) deterritorialization occurs when social relations undergo a mode of mutation that gradually changes their existing organization. In *Tasting the Sky* context, deterritorialization is manifested as characters find themselves struggling to cope with the unpredictable dynamic boundaries of their physical and spiritual surroundings.

A careful reading of Barakat's narrative shows how the memoir sheds light on displacement and territorial constraints and their impact on individuals. The narrative dives deep into the complexities of deterritorialization, both physical and emotional, reflecting what Deleuze has theorized about the phenomenon of shifting established norms and structures. This constant "decomposition" of territories manifests in *Tasting the Sky* as the protagonist struggles to survive in the midst of the changing political, cultural, geographical, and even biological realities.

In the memoir, Barakat's physical journey as a refugee reflects the notion of deterritorialization on its "basic" level. The narrator is displaced from her Ramallah home to find herself moving between shelters, hospitals, and refugee camps, on both sides of the Jordan River in a way that mirrors the collective Palestinian experience under occupation. With each new station in that journey, a new transformation occurs to the young girl. As a consequence, the boundaries shift within her identity as well. Barakat holds fragmented memories from various places that participated, as a collective whole, in creating the person she has become. For instance, as the memoir details, the movement between different schools and educational institutions in the West Bank shows how the narrator confronts imposed realities and restrictions while undergoing a slow and constant identity deterritorialization.

Considering deterritorialization from a different angle, Barakat's narrative illustrates that deterritorialization can be extended beyond geographical boundaries. A careful look into the nature of Barakat's struggle in the narrative shows how her safe familial space is "deterritorialized" and shifted resulting in sweeping emotional battles. The memoir makes it clear that this shift, at least partially, is the fruit of the kid's increasing awareness of growing up toward adulthood in a patriarchal society. This awareness is crucial since the female body becomes a battleground – a burden, a weakness, an object of both desire and targeted violence. For instance, the chapter "Six Fingers" reflects on the trauma of Zuhair's assault on the narrator. The next day of the assault Barakat declares:

I announced that I no longer wanted to go to school unless I could wait and come home with my brothers. I did not want to walk home alone. Mother protested that I would be waiting for two hours until the boys' classes let out. But I persisted (Barakat 2007: 111-12).

The female body is targeted again as the narrator describes the repeated threats of sexual harassment from Israeli soldiers:

His gestures were similar to Zuhair's. Zuhair was Palestinian like us, and the soldiers were Israeli, but it seemed they wanted the same thing. I looked at Mother's face. She was pale and trembling. Before the soldier left, he made a circle with his hands, meaning that he would return on another day (Barakat 2007: 119).

These incidents immensely affect the narrator's immature understanding of social relations and norms. Thus, deterritorialization takes place in the narrative as these unpleasant discoveries and revelations in young Barakat's life force her to develop a constantly guarded fortress that no longer finds safety in human connections or relationships. Such type of "emotional decomposing" of her sense of safety and agency casts a long shadow of occupation's influence on human identity, where basic rights and security are perpetually under threat.

One of the contributions of Barakat's memoir is that it presents the broader impact of deterritorialization and transcends the experience of a specific person or even population. This realization invites us to hold up to light the ongoing decomposing dynamics of social relations and the impact they have on the evolution of identity as the individual grows, matures, and faces the hard realities of life. By acknowledging the constant "deterritorialization" that takes place and influences both self and societal structures, Barakat's narrative paints a picture that challenges common notions about our identities and our awareness of who we are. Through this, we are forcefully reminded of the fact that our identities are in an ongoing state of negotiation shaped by uncountable internal and external factors that make us more open to transformation.

As a general remark on deterritorialization, it can be safely said that exploring the traces of nomadism and deterritorialization in Barakat's memoir can be encapsulated into three major key aspects that enhance our perception of identity formulation and evolution. First, it reflects the multifaceted nature of what Deleuze means by deterritorialization. That is to say, in addition to traditional associations and understandings of physical displacement, deterritorialization in Barakat's

memoir demonstrates how the term can be extended to more sophisticated dimensions to reflect emotional, societal, and even bodily realities. The constant transformation of the protagonist's self-awareness and agency, which is triggered by trauma and societal expectations, embodies the decomposing of fixed psychological structures that Deleuze emphasizes. An important glimpse here is that this unorthodox perspective invites the reader to examine the various ways in which our awareness of ourselves and the world around us is disrupted and reshaped.

Another noteworthy dimension in Barakat's narrative is that it highlights the dynamic relationship between individual and collective deterritorialization. This aspect can be traced throughout the plot as the narrator moves from one place to another mirroring the collective experience of thousands of displaced Palestinians. Nonetheless, the narrator's dilemma as a helpless female within an occupied patriarchal context adds new dimensions to the deterritorialization process she undergoes. As a consequence, this new revelation about deterritorialization draws clear lines between individual identity and the broader socio-political conditions that re/shapes it. That is to say, the demolishing of the individual's realities due to external oppressions and interference has its impact on the individual, who in turn, shows signs of resistance in the shape of remembering and writing. This kind of resistance, I argue, reshapes established realities and traditions under oppression.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as the protagonist chooses to write and remember, she creates what Deleuze calls "lines of flights". For Deleuze, the nomad is not a mere wanderer. The nomad is a resourceful "creator" of new chances i.e., "lines of flights" that opens up new opportunities for the individual and the community. What happens in Barakat's narrative is that she disassembles fixed notions of the Palestinian reality by reassembling a vast landscape of fragmented memories. This act results in creating unique interpretations of the past. The pressure deterritorialization creates in this context transcend it from an apparently destructive process to an active agent for progress and transformation. Therefore, the Deleuzian approach this study applies in reading *Tasting the Sky* presents an attempt to understand nomadism as a philosophy of change, transformation, and resistance.

5. Conclusion

Tasting the Sky goes beyond the confines of a typical autobiographical account of a Palestinian childhood. The novelty of the method Barakat uses in her small stories is considered a sharp contrast to the traditional narrative style. In the memoir, Barakat calls forth a rhizomatic narrative structure, similar to the interconnected spread of roots, to organically weave a texture of common memories. At the same time, the fluidity of the narrators' identities manifests as an act of resistance to the divisive forces of deterritorialization that have massively impacted the Palestinian experience. Through Deleuzian philosophical conceptualizations that profoundly inform her literary exploration, Barakat does not merely echo the impact of oppression as seen in the traditional stories of resistance; rather, she presents an original understanding of Palestinian experiences that defy linear interpretations.

The discussion this study presents shows how the memoir rejects rigid “facts” while replacing them with what can be considered a mosaic of “truths”. This lively mosaic has the potential to bring to the fore a more authentic perspective of the individual and the community by the means of inviting various voices and relationships into the narrative. This literary manifestation is closely connected to Deleuzian nomadism which celebrates the philosophical tendency to move away from fixed structures and static hierarchies. That said, the memoir stresses the fact that obtaining an authentic understanding of ourselves can be achieved by relying on the complex and interconnected maze of human experience rather than accepting one single perspective.

Finally, the deterritorialization the study traces in *Tasting the Sky* is an opportunity to mark the impact oppression and occupation have on dismantling fixed notions of place and identity. This revelation helps us understand the active decomposing dynamics in our world and their impact on the individual and society. The mode of deterritorialization that the narrative encapsulates shows how the term can be extended to more sophisticated dimensions to reflect emotional, societal, and even biological realities. Additionally, as characters and communities experience deterritorialization in the memoir, they create illuminating “lines of flight” that open the horizons to new possibilities and connections for a better future.

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Dr. Met'eb A. Alnwairan - Corresponding Author
Assistant Professor of English Literature and Criticism
Department of English Language and Literature, Zarqa University, Jordan
ORCID Number: 0000-0001-8520-2725
Email: malnwairan@zu.edu.jo

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