



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Evaluating Willpower In Tiller Of Waters

¹Lubna Mohammed Ali, Ph.D scholar in English, Gujarat University.

²Prof. Dr. Hardeepsinh Gohil, Gujarat college.

Abstract

This article discusses the issue of willpower in Hoda Barakat's novel *Tiller of Waters*, which is set among the ruins of Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War. The protagonist, Niquila, must negotiate a landscape of physical and mental destruction while dealing with the loss of his history, identity, and humanity. Willpower emerges as a guiding force throughout his journey, helping him to survive the trauma of battle while resisting despair. This study examines Niquila's psychological difficulties, as well as his relationship to memory and survival, to see how Barakat presents willpower as a way of both inner resilience and resistance against destructive forces. In doing so, the novel provides a moving reflection on the fragility and power of the human will in the face of great tragedy.

Keywords: Survival, Resilience, Trauma, Memory, Lebanese Civil War, Identity, Destruction.

Introduction

Hoda Barakat's *Tiller of Waters* looks into the severe psychological and emotional ramifications of war, with a special emphasis on Niquila's interior problems. The story is set in Beirut, which has been devastated by the Lebanese Civil War, and depicts a city and a people dealing with loss, devastation, and identity disintegration. The theme of willpower is central to the story, serving as both a survival strategy and a form of resistance. As Niquila travels through the deserted streets, tormented by memories of the past, his willpower becomes a guiding force, allowing him to confront his pain, maintain his humanity, and go forward despite overwhelming sorrow. This article investigates how willpower is intimately woven into the fabric of the novel, affecting the protagonist's experience while also mirroring bigger themes of endurance and perseverance in the face of disaster.

A brief overview of the writer's life

Hoda Barakat, a notable Lebanese author and journalist, was born in Beirut in 1952. She is known for her literary works that examine themes of conflict, exile, memory, and the human condition, frequently set against the backdrop of Lebanon's tragic past, notably the Lebanese Civil conflict. Barakat's writing is distinguished by its beautiful style, rich symbolism, and complex characterizations, which delve deeply into the psychological and emotional ramifications of violence and relocation.

Barakat studied French literature at the Lebanese University in Beirut, and she previously worked in media and education. She migrated to Paris in the 1980s and has since become a prominent figure in the Arab diaspora. Her experiences living in Lebanon during the civil war and subsequent exile shape much of her writing, giving her narratives a very personal and contemplative tone.

Her most noteworthy works are *The Stone of Laughter* (1990), *Disciples of Passion* (1993), *The Tiller of Waters* (2001), *The Kingdom of This Earth* (2012), and *Voices of the Lost* (2019), among others. Barakat's *Tiller of Waters* was awarded the renowned Naguib Mahfouz Medal for writing in 2000, solidifying her place in modern Arabic writing. Throughout her career, she has been lauded for her ability to express the psychological scars of war, as well as her investigation of topics like identity, exile, and memory persistence.

Evaluating Willpower in *Tiller of Waters*

Hoda Barakat's "*The Tiller of Waters*" looks into the complexities of memory, identity, and survival throughout the Lebanese Civil War. This investigation centers on the notion of volition, or the power of the will, and examines how humans express their agency and sustain their sense of self in the face of overwhelming external circumstances. Barakat's portrayal of Nicholas Mitri's journey highlights the numerous types of volition, including resistance, remembering, and identity preservation.

In the war-torn environment of Beirut, Nicholas Mitri's volition is largely an act of resistance. The physical damage of the city reflects the psychological and emotional upheaval that its residents are experiencing. Walking around the abandoned souks and reliving the lively past allows Nicholas to fight the erasure of his ancestry. The act of remembering becomes a type of resistance to the forces of war that aim to erase his history and identity. Nicholas' commitment to maintain his family's history and the memories of their fabric store demonstrates his willpower. The business, once a symbol of cultural wealth and familial relationships, is now in ruins. Despite this, Nicholas holds onto memories of the fabrics and meticulous craftsmanship that marked his father's profession. Nicholas avoids the dehumanizing impacts of war by immersing himself in memories. This allows him to affirm his humanity and agency in an uncertain environment.

Barakat's description of Nicholas' resistance emphasizes volition as an internal force that motivates people to exert their will in the face of external circumstances. Nicholas' memories are not passive recollections, but active endeavors to preserve the past. This active interaction with memory emphasizes the notion that volition is about more than simply making choices; it is also about maintaining those decisions in the face of hardship.

Nicholas' volitional exercise relies heavily on memory. Barakat's narrative framework interweaving of past and present illustrates the fractured character of memory and its influence on the will. For Nicholas, memories are both a source of comfort and a method of survival. They provide him a feeling of belonging and identity, anchoring him in a world that has lost its solidity. The metaphor of tilling water, an impossible undertaking, captures the contradiction of memory and will. Nicholas' efforts to recollect and preserve his history are like to tilling water—apparently fruitless but deeply significant. This metaphor emphasizes the conflict between the need to recall and the difficulty of completely regaining the past. Despite the inherent futility, Nicholas' insistence on remembering reveals the power of his will. This act of recollection allows him to proclaim his identity while still maintaining his connection to his history.

Barakat's depiction of memory as an active, purposeful process emphasizes the dynamic aspect of will. Nicholas' memories are not static; they change and adapt as he navigates the present. This flexibility of memory reflects the adaptive character of the will, which constantly reshapes itself in response to changing circumstances. Through Nicholas's interaction with memory, Barakat demonstrates how volition is a continually growing force that shapes and is influenced by experience.

Identity is another significant element in "The Tiller of Waters," and Nicholas' fight to keep his sense of self amidst the turmoil of war is an important component of his will. The devastation of Beirut's souks, as well as the loss of his family's business, have caused deep physical and psychological trauma. In this setting, Nicholas' will is focused on protecting his identity in the face of fragmentation and loss. Barakat's portrayal of Nicholas' relationship with the fabric business represents his struggle to keep his individuality. The business, with its extensive collection of fabrics and exquisite patterns, represents a cultural history that is inextricably linked to Nicholas' sense of self. Nicholas confirms his identity and places himself within a cultural continuum by recalling the business and the workmanship it represented. This act of affirmation demonstrates his volition, a conscious decision to identify oneself in terms of his background and past.

The work also looks at the relationship between individual and communal identity. Nicholas' memories of the souks and the fabric store are more than simply personal recollections; they also contribute to a greater cultural narrative. Nicholas interacts with a larger community and expresses his identity as a member of a shared history by engaging with these experiences. This relationship emphasizes the concept that volition is both an individual and a social trait, molded by and shaping a community's collective will.

Nicholas' interactions with the novel's other characters help to illustrate the concept of volition. His interactions with his neighbors, acquaintances, and love interest, Rania, highlight the difficulties of establishing one's will in the setting of interpersonal dynamics. These interactions serve as a backdrop for Nicholas's volition, both testing and strengthening it. Nicholas' link with his neighbor, a woman who has also experienced severe loss, is a moving illustration of how volition develops in relationships. Their mutual sense of loss forges a link that is both soothing and demanding. Through their chats and shared memories, they find comfort and strength in each other's presence. This interaction emphasizes the communal side of volition, as their mutual support strengthens their individual wills to live and remember.

Nicholas' unfulfilled love for Rania adds another dimension to his investigation of volition. Rania depicts a life Nicholas wished for but never completely realized. The conflict has strained their relationship, leaving Nicholas with feelings of desire and remorse. His recollections of Rania are bittersweet, with moments of delight and intimacy tempered by the realization of what may have been.

This unsatisfied yearning tests Nicholas' willpower, as he struggles with the conflict between pining for the past and embracing the present. Through these links, Barakat demonstrates the interconnectivity of individual and collective will. Nicholas's will is not independent; it is influenced by and impacts others around him. The dynamics of these partnerships highlight the difficulties of establishing one's will in a world fraught with loss and uncertainty.

Beirut, as represented in "The Tiller of Waters," serves as both a backdrop and a significant character in the story. The physical wreckage of the city reflects the psychological trauma that its citizens have endured. Nicholas's decision is closely related to his bond with the city. His efforts to traverse the ruins and remember the bright past are acts of reclamation, both for himself and for the city. Barakat's detailed depictions of Beirut's souks and bombed-out structures provide a stark contrast between the city's history and present. This contrast emphasizes the concept of will as a means of recovering space and identity. Nicholas' memories of the busy souks and the vibrant cultural life they symbolized stand as a stark contrast to the emptiness of today. Through these recollections, he emphasizes his connection to the city and its past, refusing to allow the conflict define either his or Beirut's identities.

The novel also investigates the city's symbolic value as a repository of memory and identity. The souks, with their dense network of shops and alleys, represent the intertwining of individual and community history. Nicholas' trip through the souks is one of time and memory, as he navigates the layers of history ingrained in the city's fabric. This voyage exemplifies the dynamic interaction of will and place, as Nicholas' efforts to recollect and recover his history are equally attempts to reclaim the city.

Survival, both bodily and psychological, is a major topic in "The Tiller of Waters."

Nicholas' volition is aimed not just at bodily survival, but also at the preservation of his identity and history. In times of conflict, when external forces threaten to erase individual and collective histories, volition becomes an essential tool for affirming one's existence and sustaining one's sense of self.

Nicholas' connection with his memories, as well as his efforts to save the ruins of his family's fabric store, are acts of survival. These attempts demonstrate his commitment to preserve his identity and heritage in the face of catastrophe. By remembering and affirming his link to the past, Nicholas rejects the erasure of his history and confirms his will to live.

Barakat's picture of survival emphasizes the link between physical and psychological endurance. Nicholas' memories give him with strength and continuity, grounding him in an unstable environment. His will to preserve these memories becomes a technique of navigating the turbulence of the present and finding a way to heal.

In "The Tiller of Waters," Hoda Barakat delves expertly into the topic of volition via Nicholas Mitri's experiences. Throughout his voyage, Barakat paints a nuanced picture of how people exercise their will and keep their sense of self in the face of tremendous external circumstances. Nicholas' volition displays itself in a variety of ways, including resistance, remembering, and identity preservation, demonstrating the will's dynamic and developing character.

The novel's examination of volition emphasizes the interconnection of individual and collective will, as Nicholas' attempts to recall and recover his history are impacted by and influence others around him. Barakat's evocative picture of Beirut and its souks provides a compelling backdrop against which Nicholas' will is tested and strengthened. Barakat's beautiful style and profound insights into the human condition highlight the importance of will in building identities and navigating common experiences.

Conclusion

In *Tiller of Waters*, Hoda Barakat depicts willpower as a frail yet resilient force, inextricably linked to survival, memory, and identity in the face of war's devastation. Through the character of Niqula, Barakat demonstrates the tremendous impact of trauma on the human mind, as well as the perseverance necessary to confront the loss of one's history and sense of identity. Niqula's determination allows him to negotiate the wreckage of Beirut, both physically and emotionally, as he strives to connect with his past and humanity. Ultimately, the novel emphasizes the essential role of willpower in enduring and resisting the erasure brought on by conflict, suggesting that even in the face of overwhelming despair, the human spirit has the capacity to persist. Barakat's exploration of this theme resonates beyond the specific context of the Lebanese Civil War, offering a universal meditation on resilience and the complexity of human survival.

References

Barakat, Hoda. *Tiller of Waters*. Translated by Marilyn Booth, American University in Cairo Press, 2004.

Booth, Marilyn. "Trauma, Memory, and the Lebanese Civil War in Hoda Barakat's *The Tiller of Waters*." *World Literature Today*, vol. 79, no. 3, 2005, pp. 50-56.

Hout, Syrine. *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

Mehta, Brinda J. *Rituals of Memory in Contemporary Arab Women's Writing*. Syracuse University Press, 2007.

Nash, Geoffrey. "Writing the War: Representations of the Lebanese Civil War in Lebanese Fiction." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2008, pp. 248-263.

Treacher, Amal. "War, Exile, and Trauma in Arab Women's Narratives." *Feminist Review*, vol. 69, 2001, pp. 115-128.

