Introduction of Concepts

*I Saw Ramallah* and *Passage to Dusk* are two texts which involve the formation and the utilization of national and cultural identity in a world in which both of these identities are crucial to everyday lived experience. These texts highlight individuals whose lives have been caught up within struggles largely outside of themselves. Mostly, these struggles deal with questions of nation. In both of the texts, everyday life for the protagonists involve constant reflection about the self, especially in regards to national identity. Also in both cases, the construction of identity is independent of nation, while nation is revealed to be a subjective creation contingent upon an individual and his own relationship with the nation and culture.

*I Saw Ramallah*, set at the borders of Israel and Palestine, engages with Mourid Barghouti's life long struggle with his absence from his home. During his time away, he watched as an observer as the people he most identified with, whose culture imbed itself into him, continued to be at the forefront of world issues as a land where intense violence raged, and conflict seemed irresolvable. *I Saw Ramallah*, a memoir, or more specifically, a life narrative, is an important walk through an individual's construction of his self in the moment he returns to the land which has brought him so much joy, and pain. Barghouti's text questions the imposed standards of the Palestinian identity, or any national identity for that matter, through the way in which the construction of the self and the subjectivity of nation are developed in the novel.

With more emphasis on the reconstruction of the past selves, *Passage to Dusk* critiques the formation of national and cultural identity through the way in which those formations rely upon the interaction between an individual and the selves within his self. In *Passage*, the construction of the self is a focused upon by the reconstructions of a particular moment. This moment is one in which the narrator continually reassesses - it is a moment of violence which culminates from, as it is gathered later in the narrative, the complexity of religious and ethnic clashes within the nation of Lebanon. In Lebanon, a nation whose roots are composed of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, the narrator of *Passage to Dusk* struggles to find a sense of nationality, of belonging, the type of identity which Barghouti's Palestinians all seem to have.

These texts engage with very personal, very intimate accounts of specific individual's and their lives, in which lies the possibility of resisting standards and norms imposed upon individuals by national and cultural identities which create difference ultimately leading to such struggles as with Palestine and Lebanon, between their nation and their 'others'. Within these very particular, limited perspectives, focus is drawn upon the discourse within an individual's self. The construction of the self highlights how nation is a subjective concept, borne out of the imagination and creation of individuals. The nation does not appear in these texts as empirical entities with ontologic securit, rather, they are products of the construction of the self, tools with which an individual constructs his identity based upon his relation to that which is outside of himself.

This subjectivity is determined in the 'emergence,’ or the precise moment when the self is constructed. Almost impossible to truly pin-point, the construction of the self occurs instantaneously as individuals live life, stringing together the events of the past with the present. This narrating, the individual's ability to create coherent identities throughout one’s life, claims subjective truth as its core. This subjectivity, at the core, is what develops the concept of nation, of difference, of 'other'. And, it lies specifically in each passing moment when the subjective individual begins to write and construct the reality around him.

Freedom from imposed narratives of social identities is available in the act of writing. Not only in personal, written narratives, (i.e. poetry, novels, comics, etc.) but in the everyday lived experience in which every moment the self is constructed, and the plethora of meaning
solidified into a single identity. In everyday life, group narratives are accessible, easy, standardized and pre-constructed for distribution, making the values and meanings which those group's wish instill into the individual solidified and contained. However, as is the case with these two texts, there is possibility to resist the desire for conformity, for homogeneity, for pre-constructed truths and values. Instead, these truths, values, myths, once recognized as subjective, especially contingent on the individual's performance of the construction of the self, can be resisted. And that places the freedom and power to create meaning and knowledge entirely in the subjective perspective of the individual.

Subjectivity and the Construction of the Self

After 30 years away from his home in Ramallah, apart from his wife and children, his family and the grave of his older brother, Mourid Barghouti crosses the bridge between Israel and Ramallah, returning home. Here, at the bridge caliming the title of the first chapter, the narrative begins in the present tense with full and meticulous detail: "It is hot on the bridge. A drop of sweat slides from my forehead to the frame of my spectacles, then the lens" (Barghouti 1). It is here, from the very first line, where "lived circumstance," the meticulously written first person life narrative, pulls one into the intimate space of the narrator, the particular individual, where nation is birthed and constructed. Throughout this thirty-three page chapter, we, as readers, are stuck with Barghouti in his perspective and in his mind, with him in the hot deserts on the outskirts of Palestine, witness to the performance which is about to take place.

Barghouti’s narrative, or rather, life narrative, places the reader inside his own specific perspective which reflects the subjectivity of the narrative; more importantly, the life narrative gives the meanings which are produced in the narrative a distinct view of truth which lies solely in the subjective construction of the author's lived experiences. The narrative's emphasis on the performance of an individual, on the present day, particular physical events which take place (the sweat dropping from forehead), is precisely the way in which the meanings generated by Barghouti are particular to his own experience, his own subjectivity. This focus on the subjective nature of truth within this narrative allows for the deconstruction of nation as a distinct object, an empirical entity in and of itself which functions continuously in all its forms and diverse applications. Instead, the subjective nation is generated by and through a single individual's subjective construction of the self.

In the introduction to I Saw Ramallah, Edward Said states that there is a "good deal of politics in Barghouti's book, but none of it is either abstract or ideologically driven: whatever comes up about politics arises from lived circumstances of Palestinian life" (Barghouti ix). This statement reflects how within Barghouti's narrative, concepts of the political, defined by difference, manifested through the concepts of nation, are created solely through the 'lived circumstance' of Barghouti's life - the subjectivity of his experience. Said's statement emphasizes the way in which the construction of nation and political identities is contingent upon the initial construction of the self which is produced in every moment of an individual's lived experience. This priority and emphasis on subjectivity will clarify the complications which nation, a product resulting from the construction of the self, creates, namely the contradictions between the subjective perspectives of each member of a seemingly objective nation.

As Barghouti crosses the bridge, he begins to present these complications asking "how was this piece of dark wood able to distance a whole nation from its dreams?" (Barghouti 9). His question reveals how the nation is a constructed concept, and, although the entity which distances Barghouti from his land is Israel, it is rather the constructions of the self in relation to nation, not a physical or empirical object that a bridge could distance itself from. Instead, the nation is
created and constructed through an individual's own subjective lived experience. His question reveals how the nation is not an entity or an object, but rather a construction created through an individual's relationship with that which is outside of his or her self. On the bridge, the subjectivity of Barghouti's construction of nation is made explicitly apparent: "Here on the prohibited planks, I walk and chatter my whole life to myself. I chatter my life, without a sound, without a pause" (Barghouti 10). In this case, Barghouti's own relationship with the bridge, his subjective experience of his own lived life in which he experienced the distancing, allows him to question the objectivity of nation, its viability as an entity which could be truly distanced by a bridge.

For Homi K. Bhabha, the first step in clarifying the conception of nation in relationship to the self is to "question that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion," as Bhabha states, "the many as one" (Bhabha 142). This is the metaphor which allows for nation to exist, creating a homogenous community where nation is imagined as "sovereign ... conceived [in] a deep, horizontal comradeship ... for so many people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited beginnings" (Anderson 7). What Barghouti's narrative reveals is how this conception of nation, the 'metaphor of social cohesion,' the thought that different individuals may share identical national identities, is incorrect. Instead, his narrative explores how the nation is specifically imagined and constructed as an objective entity through a subjective construction of the self. In the initial chapter of Barghouti's narrative, it is obvious that the nation is not an objective entity - rather, it is a construction contingent upon the development of the subjective self.

What this sets up, the subjectivity of nation as a product of the construction of the self, is a new vision of the way in which the concepts of nation are based upon the act of writing, the subjective writing of particular individuals. This act of writing is specifically relevant to the discussion of nation, "the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the 'nation' as narrative strategy" (Bhabha 140). This vision of nation, as a product of a narrative strategy in which the writing of it makes it especially important, places the construction of the nation within the subjectivity of individual lived experience. This is what compels Bhabha to further define nation as the writing of the nation.

The writing of nation takes place through the framework of historicism. Historicism brings to nation the ability to construct a cohesive grand narrative, a standardized official narrative which provides legitimacy. What "the linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes" accomplishes for a nation is the creation of an objective identity which gives it the most legitimacy as it is deemed real, with an essence, and transcendent. This writing of nation "most commonly signifies a people, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity" (Bhabha 140). The narrative strategy of nation is historicism, and it is ultimately the way in which individuals on their own, or through cooperation with others, create an objective conception of nation through the subjective construction of the self, or selves, which signify and give meaning to the experiences, 'events and ideas,' of particular peoples.

In his groundbreaking work, What is Nation?, Ernest Renan suggests that a nation is a theoretical entity; it is to Renan "a soul, a spiritual principle" (Renan 53). Renan's analysis of nation explores the very metaphor of 'social cohesion' which Bhabha notes as the initial metaphor which must be deconstructed in any discussion of nation. Renan's spiritual principles are imagined principles which engage with the strategy of signification which allows nation to be an "empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity" (Bhabha 140). The nation, not physically real as he suggests provinces or previous empires were (bound by language or
geography), it is instead as Renan puts it, "a historical result brought about by a series of convergent facts" (Renan 45). This historicity, along with 'spiritual' principles created through narrative, allows for a nation to take on an identity, a living form. The nation as a result of history also allows Benedict Anderson to define nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 6), an 'invention,' which he goes so far as to clarify is not merely 'fabrication or falsity' but 'imagining' and 'creation' (Anderson 6). In this way, the spiritual principles which Renan suggests creates commonality and homogeneity in nations which are created, imagined, and constructed in Anderson's model of the nation.

What both theorists agree upon is the way in which nations are imagined, through the act of writing, to be homogenous, to share certain inherent 'principles.' These inherent 'principles,' as Renan suggests, are "historical results" Renan. Historicism, as Hegel and Marx utilize in their constructions of nation, is the way in which these principles, or nation, is created. It is the construction and manipulation of certain histories of a particular group which allows for a nation to have a clear past, linking those memories to clear identity in the present, and somewhat solidified vision of the future. This characteristic of the nation, its creation through historicism, which ultimately allows it to function, or to exist, is the creation of spiritual principles which allow for members of the nation to 'imagine itself sovereign' and as a homogenous 'community.' It is the way in which individuals become a part of, and instantaneously represent a homogenous nation, "which, if pushed too far, may assume something resembling the archaic body of the despotic or totalitarian mass?" (Bhabha 142).

What this suggests is that nations are created as objects through the way in which historicism allows individuals to create and imagine a continuously objective nation with its own empirical existence. In Barghouti's narrative, dates and important events are continually referenced in relation to the history of Palestine and its struggle to create a nation. Although Palestine is not officially a nation, Barghouti's narrative reveals how those who desire a nation of Palestine utilize history being a historicist with their knowledge or not, creating the legitimacy of a Palestinian nation. Continually throughout the narrative dates and important events, the historical facts which Renan believes nations are created through, are referenced in order for Barghouti's speaker to identify with the Palestinian national identity. These moments reveal how historicism is a specific narrative strategy which enables the standardization of certain key events in the nation: June, 1967, July 1944, the PLO, Occupation, the Infitada, the Gulf War, (Barghouti) and other specific objects and events which are used to create a history and identity distinctly Palestinian.

Historicism, then, creates grand narratives of nation of which standardized identities are created which prescribe certain differences from others and allow for a homogenous community to exist. Historicism focuses upon specific moments of a particular 'nation's' history and utilizes them in a narrative strategy to create some kind of continuous identity which allows for contradictions between different people within the boundaries of that nation to be resolved (spiritual principles), allowing for homogeneity to exist. This historicism, developed from constructions of individual's narratives, imagined and invented, creates that 'horizontal comradeship,' and homogeneity - the modern metaphor of 'social cohesion.' As dates, events, and cultural objects are produced and standardized through the hegemony by historicist constructions of cultural products, national identity is made readily available and easily consumed by individual's who take those objects and, through a narrative strategy, construct a self based upon their subjective experience in relation to those artifacts.

Although nations construct standards of difference, the benefits of nation exist precisely through the way in which nation also unifies certain people of difference, cultural or ethnic. Nations also manifest themselves through its institutions which provide certain benefits. These
benefits allow for the nation to transcend simple politics of difference within the community, or on a kinship level, establishing practical products in social services, security, laws, etc. These benefits come at the price of buying into the standards and norms of the nation; it is the complication between the yearning for a nation-state providing all the utilities of a modern country, with the difficulty of giving up one's individuality.

Barghouti's narrative does at some level intensely desire a legitimate nation of Palestine, however, though the narrative utilizes specific events and dates to compose a Palestinian history and identity, the subconscious application of historicism also finds resistance. In numerous moments in the narrative, Barghouti questions the desire to create a homogenous identity, a bound existence based upon a specific national narrative. In the account of a radio interview in Palestine Barghouti faces the question, "Are we [Palestinians] not a miraculous people, a different people, a different nation?" (Barghouti 121). His response, resistance to that concept which proposes a nation of homogenous people: "Different from whom exactly? Different from what?" (Barghouti 121). Continually in the narrative, Barghouti resists the imposition of the nation which depends upon the metaphor of 'social cohesion,' the solidification of boundaries, the standardization of his Palestinian identity, or rather, the identity of his own self.

This resistance towards standards imposed by groups through historicism is made known through the way in which Barghouti recognizes that the nation comes into existence through the construction of the self, a subjective process which relates how it is not an objective identity but rather a creation or invention. Barghouti's narrative is able to expose the subjectivity of the nation through its emphasis on the active, subjective construction of the self: the writing of the self as a narrative strategy which creates meaning through the relationship between the individual and his or her experience with Nature, or all that is outside of his self. This subjectivity is made apparent through the way in which this Barghouti's narrative engages with his own immediate experience, and with his attempt to interpret and reinterpret the ontologic meaning which has already passed.

This venture in interpreting and reinterpreting the history, meaning, and purpose of both a national Palestinian identity and Barghouti's own individual identity, made through writing, is described in Barghouti's chapter Displacements as a displacement, carrying with it all the connotations of political and cultural strangeness. The value of writing lies within its ability to resist or change the standardized, invested histories and meanings of which identities are created. Writing is that subjectivity which makes the poet "a stranger in [his] places to [his] place at the same time," "fragile and proud at the same time," while "he desires his two states and his two positions at the same time" (Barghouti 132). In this state of liminality, of which writing is the catalyst which promotes strangeness, subjectivity is at its peak: it is where both perspectives of a binary exist at the same time, where the most desirable meaning is formed in that state of the liminal.

His lived circumstance is a "writing," "a displacement." And, through the act of writing resistance is possible, in fact desired: "the poet strives to escape from the dominant used language, to a language that speaks for itself for the first time" (Barghouti 132). In this way, being able to construct the self is held in priority over the formation of national identity precisely because nation is always dependent upon the initial writing of the self. It is in the subjectivity of the writing of the self which allows for the individual to "escape from the chains of the tribe, from its approvals and its taboos" (Barghouti 132). In every moment, it is this ability to resist the standardized narratives of anything outside of the self which writing provides. In the construction of the self where subjectivity rules, every construction is true whether it involves the concept of nation and national identity or not.

Moving over the bridge as a nationalistic song plays in his head, Barghouti begins to
deeply question how it is that the standardized meanings, the concepts of homogeneity and strength of 'spiritual principles' of nation become so important to his brethren. It is, in a way, resistance to these meanings but also an admission of participation in these ideals. However, his suppositions, if it is the "people's need to have their voice heard through listening to it from another? Is it their attachment to a voice outside themselves expressing what is inside them?" (Barghouti 11) points to a larger question of subject and object. The need for affirmation of meaning by those outside of the self complicates the subjectivity of nation, its principles and spirit. However, it is through Barghouti's choice of narrative framework, that of the memoir and autobiography, which points to the construction of the self, the writing of the self, as that very moment when the individual expresses to his own self what is inside.

*I Saw Ramallah*, as a whole, is an example of an individual's attempt to construct the self. It is an autobiography, a life narrative, a metafictional mirroring of an internal conversation within his own self where at times he is truly free and able to resist the contradictory notions of homogeneity and objectivity that nation seeks to establish. Barghouti's particular framework, that of the autobiographical memoir, provides a framework which allows him to be entirely subjective. The benefit of life narrative, outlined by Smith and Watson, stems from the way in which “is a historically situated practice of self-representation” (Smith and Watson 14), ultimately being the “the postcolonial expression of freedom from autobiography as father narrative” (Orr 1), the subjective rather than the ‘canonical.’ The choice to utilize the memoir highlights the emphasis on the construction of the self, the writing of the self, and, in turn, the writing of the nation, of which Barghouti's own experience is the subject.

Throughout the narrative, Barghouti refers to his past and his memories of living in Palestine in order to develop and construct his present self. The narrative is filled with metafictional technique, such as parenthetical repetitions ("Life will not be simplified" (Barghouti)), the ambiguity of reference when Barghouti speaks in the third person, and the movement between poetry and memoir. These moments of metafiction engage with the moments where Barghouti, as the author of the autobiography, becomes his own subject. In this way, he begins to express to himself, through his active reinterpretations of memories from his own lived experience, his own 'voice' and 'what is inside'. Based upon an ontologic existence which has passed, the 'lived experience' of his own life, Barghouti is able to speak to himself through the act of writing where, as a poet, his subjective rewritings of his lived experience become different identities of the self.

Standards imposed by groups such as nation are resisted precisely in moments of the construction of the self. *I Saw Ramallah* is an example of how the construction of the self is a constant writing and rewriting, interpretation and reinterpretation, of the subjective lived experience of a single, particular individual. Barghouti's narrative is immersed in subjectivity, revealing that the nation, that the political, all comes from the way an individual writes, or constructs, an identity based on a past self. Resistance to the standards which result from narratives imposed by groups or cultures outside of the self happens when individuals recognize that these narratives are created by and within their own self - through the construction of the self.

This construction happens in everyday lived experience. It is the constant writing and narration in an individual's mind, a subjective creating, which is where nation is created. In everyday life, the construction of identity is constant. Barghouti's most important passage defines politics as "the family at breakfast" (Barghouti 43). In direct questions, posed to the second-person, the reader, Barghouti pushes through what politics is. He questions:

"Can you, for example, afford your breakfast? Where are your children who have gone
forever from these their usual chairs? Whom do you long for this morning? What rhythm is it that pushes you to hurry toward pleasures life has promised you ... Staying away from politics is also politics. Politics is nothing and it is everything.” (Barghouti 44).

Politics is the construction of identity, it is, as shown in these questions, everything and nothing. Its everything-ness lies in the fact that we are social creatures, who live with others, who search for answers, who recognize difference, who have identities and real lives. Its nothingness refers to the relativity of truth based in the subjectivity of the individual's construction of the self. It has already passed, it is continually rewritten. Politics, which arise from 'lived circumstance' in this novel, represents the constant, intimate, internal struggle between the numerous selves vying for attention during the construction of the Self which occurs in every living, empirical, ontologic moment which passes. *I Saw Ramallah* reveals how standards and impositions of values, groups, and meaning may always be resisted if an individual recognizes the arbitrariness of those impositions and places all power and freedom in the construction of the self.

**Confronting Selves within the Self**

As Homi K Bhabha discusses the formation of nation as contingent upon the 'writing of nation,' the writing of nation as has been discussed thus far has been contingent upon the construction of the self where the writing occurs. *Passage to Dusk* focuses upon specific moments in the narrator's life just as *I Saw Ramallah* does, however these many events are continually reinterpreted and reconstructed. It is not solely the actions of the events themselves, but the way in which the narrator constructs or reconstructs his identity in each of these specific moments of lived experience. Independence from nation, or rather, imposed group identities which form standards and norms, is found in these reconstructions of the self. Bhabha describes not only the writing of nation but also the importance of the performative (Bhabha ). What the performative suggests is that the nation is not only contingent on writing, but the particular performance of lived experience by particular individuals.

*Passage to Dusk* is an account of an intensely personal individual story, a reflection upon an exact moment out of many available to return to at any point in one's life, ready for reconstruction and reinterpretation. This returning to the particular moment of lived experience encapsulates the 'performative' of Bhabha, as well as his conception of "another time of writing that will be able to inscribe the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and place that constitute the problematic 'modern' experience of the Western nation" (Bhabha 141). The problem of time and place refer to the transience of particular moments of lived experience, and the constant attempt of individuals to recapture the meanings or even feelings of that particular moment. *Passage* not only reflects the subjectivity of nation and identity, it explores the construction of identity which takes place in each passing moment of lived experience.

It is in this 'new time of writing' where the metaphors of 'social cohesion' fail, where subjectivity is determined as epistemic truth, and where nation, whose power lies in the imposition of standards and norms, can be resisted. *Passage* is able to recreate single moments of the narrator's life through the way in which repetition signals to the reader that they are still within the same time and space, or rather, that same time and space is returned to be recreated or reinterpreted. Throughout the novel, Daif's narrator repeats certain actions within the specific memories he returns too: repetitions like "They took my right arm from me," refer to the certain, separate memories from specific events of that narrator's life. At other times he points to actions such as the knocks on the door and smoking of cigarettes, signaling that he is with Abu Ali before the men come and knock on his door. Continually throughout, he makes it known that he
was on sleeping pills and sedatives. These repetitions indicate that each passage of the text returns to the same time and space, the "ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections" where the construction of the self takes place.

The construction of the self in Passage to Dusk works through the way in which the narrative depends upon memory. As the text progresses, the events, actions, and meanings which are related in the text are referred to and constructed through the narrator's confrontation with his past, and his memory. In terms of the subjectivity of the construction of identity, and extended from that, the nation, it is memory which writes and constructs. This dreamlike narrative, surreal at times, hinges upon the last bit of information given to the reader, the fact that the narrator "[gets] up and [takes] a multiple dose ... collapsing on the bed, waiting for the time to pass, for the pills to do their work" (Daif 100). This drug induced state, which at some level sheds light on the surreality of the narrative, is a state which highlights the importance of memory in the subjective creation of the self, dependent upon social frameworks which allow for the affirmation of those memories.

Maurice Halbwach's essay, The Social Frameworks of Memory, central to the subjective construction of the self is memory. For Halbwach's true memory, different from a memory from the dream state, exists when "one must be capable of reasoning and comparing and of feeling in contact with a human society that can guarantee the integrity of our memory" (Halbwachs 41). Passage to Dusk and its seemingly dreamlike narrative, to Halbwachs, might not be determined as 'true memory,' placing it in the subjective realm of loose constructions, not true memory: "we are incapable of reliving our past while we dream, and that if our dreams evoke images that have the appearance of memories, these images are introduced in a fragmented state" (Halbwachs 41). The narrative of Passage, imagined through a dreamlike, drug induced state, represents a completely subjective remembering which, although suggested by its subjectivity as not 'true memory,' could be argued to be just that.

Passage is able to create meaning and what is known as 'true memory' simply because memory in and of itself is the subjectivity of the construction of self in solidified form. It is memory which allows individuals to fill the "gap [which] continues to exist between the vague recollection of today and the impression of our childhood" (Halbwachs 46). This gap, more specifically the gap between the ontologic lived performance of an individual and the reflective writing and construction of identity, is precisely where subjectivity reigns. Memory, for individuals, functions in the same way historicism functions in the grand narratives of nation. The desire for the affirmation or legitimization of memories, as Halbwachs describes, is the same desire nation bears in mind as it constructs its identity and objectivity through historicism as a narrative strategy.

Memory, in Halbwachs terms, requires society in order to affirm truth and validity. However, truth and validity have little bearing when the self is determined as subjective. Memory does not simply require society alone, it is all which is outside of the self "appealing ... in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we supposed they could have asked us" (Halbwachs 38). This social world could be found in the society made up of other individuals, objects within the immediate perspective of the individual, or the simple interaction with nature itself which triggers the immediate reflection that that which is outside is not the self. In Passage to Dusk, this relates to the separation between the individual's physical body: the body immediately makes known difference from the outside world, whether that be between another individual or nature itself.

Daif's narrator recognizes this separation between the body and the immediate outside, physical world which is the inherent in the immediate experience of the individual. In the novel, this complication is represented through the account of ants which take pieces of the narrator's
body and spread them around the country. The body, in this case, is the agent which creates an immediate sense of difference between the self and that which is outside of the self. Once his body is scattered the narrator questions how he will be able to "reassemble [him]self, recollect the shreds" (Daif 32). In narrator's mind, the loss of his physical self, and the scattering thereof prevents him from being able to construct identity. The loss of his physical body is the loss of the boundaries of his own self which inherently create the division between society and individual of which memory depends upon.

This vision of memory and its relation to the construction of the self reveals how the physical body is the primary marker between the self and that which is not the self. Within Daif's novel, the self is continually reinterpreted and reconstructed. The subjectivity of the self lies within the utilization of memory's social frameworks which depend upon the relationship between the individual's lived experience and its relation to that which is not the self. This division results in a sense that the construction of identity is dependent upon the physical body and the way in which the body creates separation from all that is not the self. However, the physical body serves as its own physical entity which imposes its own immediate standards of difference. In light of this, the self is constructed through the dialogue created from the body's physical apprehension of all outside of the self, and the subjective writing and interpretation of what the body, the lived experience, reveals to the self.

Individuals, like nations, desire that continuous, coherent identity based upon certain 'spiritual principles. The ability to string together each event into a continuous, coherent identity happens instantaneously: it is through the body wherein an individual is "capable of splitting [one's] consciousness so that it becomes its own observer" (Kolakwoski 115) which allows for an individual to continually, instantaneously, construct the self through the subjective interpretation of the initial performance of lived experience when the individual is truly simply an observer. Within Daif's novel this splitting of consciousness between the body and the self, in which the narrator questions the ability to create a coherent identity, to 'reassemble' his objective existence, reflects the subjectivity of the construction of the self in that this splitting of the physical body and that which is not the body is the point at which subjectivity is at its peak, the precise moment where ontologic existence passes and the self desperately attempts to construct that coherent identity which it so desires.

In a particular passage of Passage, Daif does not simply, deliberately disassociate with his past self, but rather reveals understanding that his past self is entirely different from his self in the present. The subjectivity of each moment of the day in which an individual constructs identity is the main way Daif's narrator is able to say that his past self, a previous construction, is not the same person as he is in the present. In the account of his poisoning of a village, which he leaves no doubt was his doing ("I don't deny the incident" Daif 23), he also states that "it wasn't [him] who did that; it was that reckless boy who did it" (Daif 23). Constantly, Daif's narrator makes it explicitly known that each moment is in itself a performance between an individual and a past self, or future self, produced through the subjective construction of identity.

Passage to Dusk is a novel which engages with the specific moment of the construction of the self. This moment, the subjective writing of identity, the 'writing of nation,' is capture through a new time of writing specifically created through the way in which Passage is written. This new time of writing engages with the reciprocal relationship between the self and the subjective constructions of previous selves. In Passage, almost all the other characters who interact with Daif's narrator are ambiguous figures without clear identities; simply the super, or 'Abu Ali,' simply the "they" who must have killed the narrator, the "dead man's wife," "the brother-in-law," - all nameless. This ambiguity translates into the ambiguity of the narrator's own self, reflecting the way in which the construction of the self relies upon the reconstruction of
a past self which experienced and lived in a real, empirical world.

This namelessness and ambiguity of selves carries its way into the final passages of the narrative. Abu Ali, assumed to be someone separate from the narrator, suddenly is aligned with the narrator himself. In the final passages, it slowly becomes apparent that the narrator may be speaking to himself, a different self, named Abu Ali: "What did Abu Ali see in the eyes of Abu Ali? Why did he smile? What was the meaning behind this half smile of his? And who smiled first?" (Daif 96). The answers to the questions apparently spoken by the narrator: "It's me, Abu Ali." (Daif 96). And, in the final passage references by the narrator that "Abu Ali knows that I have a lighter," repeated twice, reveals that perhaps during this whole narrative Abu Ali was in fact a different self imagined by the narrator. The split of consciousness which allows him to be his own observer, to construct the self in the supposed position of the ontologic viewer.

Passage to Dusk and its focus on certain exact moments as the point at which the self begins to construct identity reveals how the 'society' outside of oneself which allows memory to function is never an object but rather one of numerous constructions and reconstructions of the self. Through the way in which the narrator of Passage continually reconstructs his past lived experiences, Daif is able to emphasize the subjective realm in which the construction of the self occurs, where confrontations with other selves within the self vie for attention. The resistance of standards of imposed groups, national, religious, ethnic, is possible within these exact moments of lived experience. Additionally, individuals themselves impose standards within their own constructions of self while these impositions remain a subject of reflection, rather than objective entities like nation, whose desire for legitimacy progresses the constructions of difference within the creation of identity.

Subjectivity and Resistance

This essay explores two narratives which focus intensely on the construction of the self set in two countries whose nation(state), nationalisms, and national identity are continually and seemingly perpetually in question. In their focus on the lived experience of an individual, the performative actions of their lives in which every moment is an opportunity to construct one's self through the process of writing, the subjectivity of both nation and the self is reflected. This subjectivity relates how lived experience apprehended through the physical body gives individuals the ability to resist standards and norms created in order to develop a continuous, sensible identity. However, as Bhabha suggests, the creation of national identity through historicism imposes standards and hierarchies of power must like the construction of the self utilizes memories in order to create a coherent identity of the self.

Opposed to the continual reinterpretations and reconstructs of subjective reflections created and invented by individuals in particular, specific contexts the emphasis on the performance of lived experience in this essay, on the instantaneous construction of identity which takes place as the self confronts an outside, physically different world, as well as in Bhabha's work, what he characterizes as the "temporal dimension in the inscription of political entities - that are also potent symbolic and affective sources of cultural identity - serves to displace the historicism that has dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force" (Bhabha 140). This emphasis serves to highlight the subjective nature of the writing of nation and the construction of identity. The difficulties which result from impositions of group standards, especially in the conception of the nation is the constant confrontation "with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population" (Bhabha 148). What both of these narratives suggest is that the nation, as well as identity, desires a homogenous, coherent identity and constructs that through a subjective creation or imagining. They also suggest how these
constructions of the self are dependent upon the "other of ourselves" (Bhabha 140). These other selves within the self consistently battle for attention during each passing moment in which individuals construct identity in the face of that which is outside of the self.

Both of these texts recognize that the nation, as well as the constructed self is not a homogenous identity. In *I Saw Ramallah* it is through the many moments Barghouti begins to question that metaphor of 'social cohesion.' In Passage, it is the ambiguity of every character, their nationalisms, their religions, their motivations. These texts prove as examples which reveal how homogenous identities created in the construction of the self, particularly in the construction of a national self, cannot exist precisely because of the subjectivity of each individual's construction of the self based upon their particular lived experiences. It is a subjective vision of the self which deconstructs the standards and historicism of national grand narratives whose primary objective is to standardize meaning in order to gain legitimacy.

Resistance to these standardized meanings which often times restrict individuals from expanding their own sphere of knowledge, as well as promoting stigmatized depictions of difference which ultimately lead to violent struggle, happens precisely through the way in which individual's are continually subjectively constructing the self. Although nation imposes standards, so do individual's themselves in relation to their past and present and future identities. These transient identities are altogether unique, specific to particular situations and moments, and includes or excludes national, religious, racial, or cultural identities. In every moment which passes, the choice is made available: to subjectively construct new meanings and identities which resist standards and norms, or to, still subjectively, but perhaps more easily, with less effort, utilize readily made meanings and identities in every moment the self is in its construction.

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*Works Cited*


