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COUNTER-NARRATING THE NATION:
HOMI K. BHABHA'S THEORY OF HYBRIDITY IN *FIVE BROKEN CAMERAS*

by

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Abstract

This paper examines the theories of Homi K. Bhabha, a major figure in contemporary post-colonial study. His work on hybridity, mimicry, and counter-narrative helps to illuminate the documentary film *Five Broken Cameras*, which shows five years in the life of Palestinian farmer, Emad Burnat, under Israeli occupation in the West Bank. The film is shown to be a performative counter-narrative representing Palestinian national becoming.

Counter-Narrating the Nation:

Homi K. Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity in *Five Broken Cameras*

It is the historical certainty and settled nature of that term [nationalism] against which I am attempting to write of the Western nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the locality of culture. . . more around temporality than about historicity: a form of living that is more complex than 'community'; more symbolic than 'society'; more connotative than 'country'; less patriotic than patrie; more rhetorical than the reason of State; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; less centred than the citizen. . . more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.

(Bhabha, *LC*¹ 200)

Five Broken Cameras is an amateur documentary film about a Palestinian protest against Israeli settlements and against a wall that would separate communities. Released in 2011, *Five Broken Cameras* covers the years 2005 through 2009. The film takes place, for the most part, in the Palestinian village of Bil'in, which is located in the West Bank approximately thirty kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. Emad Burnat, a Palestinian farmer and father of four who grew up in and lives in Bil'in, captured the majority of the footage. The film is a national emblem, representing a people united in their imaginings of themselves, but not recognized as a political entity. Through the representation of memory, protest, and resistance, *Five Broken*

¹ In order to simplify citations, Homi K. Bhabha's works will be shortened as follows: *The Location of Culture* (*LC*); *Nation and Narration* (*NN*).

Cameras becomes the expression of a national becoming. Homi K. Bhabha, a post-colonial theorist who specializes in ideas of narrative, memory, and resistance (all of which are facets of a hybrid identity), is key to interrogating the documentary. Through memory, the film constructs a counter-narrative. Bhabha's theories provide a useful theoretical tool to investigate the importance and impact of *Five Broken Cameras*, especially the subversive power of mimicry, the distinctiveness of hybrid identity, and the problematic narratives of modern nationhood.

Burnat originally bought his first camera in order to document the birth of his fourth son, Gibreel, who was born in February 2005, the same month that the Israeli cabinet approved a final, revised route of the West Bank Barrier, the wall that would separate the Palestinians in the West Bank from the Israelis. The wall was meant to protect the Israeli state, and simultaneously its existence functioned as a denial of Palestinian national identity. Nearly 50,000 Palestinians occupied land on the newly claimed Israeli side of the barrier as of February 2005, dispersed throughout 38 towns and villages (*The Humanitarian Impact* 3). The final route of the wall, decided in February 2005, placed it through one of the most fertile regions in the West Bank, separating many Palestinian villages (Bil'in included) from their farms and places of work. Therefore, Gibreel, Burnat's main subject, grew up alongside a wall of separation, intimately experiencing the effects of the wall on Bil'in and on the Palestinian people.

Initially, the film was intended only as a personal family video, but Burnat quickly realized the importance of capturing the footage of Palestinian responses to Israeli occupation and the creation of the barrier wall. Still, Burnat and his family are one of the primary focuses of the story. Burnat's recordings intersperse his intimately portrayed family life and his community's interactions with the planning and construction of the wall. The film shows how the family's relationships and identity are changed by the existence of the wall, and how the wall

modifies their existence in return. Memorably, Gibreel's first word was *jidar*, which means wall. The lives of both family and community grow around the growth of this wall, and the viewer feels the reverberations.

Five Broken Cameras takes its name from the five different cameras Burnat used in filming over the course of five years, each of which was successively broken, shot, or shattered by tear gas canisters, bullets, and fist fights. The documentary begins solemnly with broken, static-filled images of dirt, rock, and brush, shot by Burnat as he is running, jolting the camera in his hand. All the viewer can hear at this point is shouting in Arabic, no subtitles, and minimal, funereal music. When the voiceover begins in Arabic (spoken by Burnat with subtitles in English), it prompts a feeling of tormented memory, which becomes a re-occurring theme within the film. The opening lines frame the emotion of the film:

I've lived through so many experiences. They burn in my head like a hot flame.

[Running, camera shows ground, sky, person, etc] Pain and joy, fears and hope are all mixed together. I'm losing track. The old wounds don't have time to heal. New wounds will cover them up. *[Camera spins to show smoke from grenades? tear gas?]* So I film to hold onto my memories. These are my five cameras. Every camera is an episode in my life. (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:01:30)

The film's function as memory is evocative, and the repetition of feeling and event (protest after protest, arrest after arrest) allows each moment to gain longevity. Davidi commented on his approach to the film's editing in one interview, "The whole construction of the film was trying to . . . to create a sense of time and the sense of development; because repetitiveness is very important to understand occupation" ("The Story of a West Bank Village").

Within the second scene of the film, Burnat explains his personal connection to the land. Emphasizing his long-standing relationship to the land, Burnat alludes to the many generations of his family that have worked the land around Bil'in. Burnat himself has spent his entire life in the same village—more than home, the land is almost a part of the family in the way the village relies on it to provide sustenance. "The land draws us inward," he explains (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:02:42). So, when Burnat plays footage of the bulldozers that have come to clear the land, the image is especially wrenching; in one shot, a deer bounds away, presumably scared by the commotion of machinery, and certainly foreshadowing the greater displacement that will follow. But the bulldozers are not an entirely new phenomenon; Israeli settlements have been built as far back as Burnat's own birth, as Burnat states. However, now the settlements are beginning to encroach interminably further onto the Palestinians' land.

Due to his new camera, Burnat becomes more involved in town events, and so whenever something is happening in the village, he rushes to capture the footage. For example, Burnat films one encounter between Israeli soldiers driving through the village, during which the Palestinians are using homemade noisemakers (buckets, small instruments, etc) in protest and the soldiers fire shots at the villagers in response. The scene ends with an image of fiery rubble at the end of a village street. The shots are edited so there is no direct explanation for the course of events, but the viewer fills in the gaps from visual clues within each scene. Furthermore, the scene is representative of other such similar occurrences.

Throughout the film, Burnat spends a great deal of time with two other fellow villagers, Phil (whose real name is Ahmad Bassam, but was affectionately referred to by local children as El Phil, or "The Elephant") and Adeeb. Phil, beloved by the children in Bil'in, is a gentle giant with a playful, carefree demeanor. Perennially optimistic, Phil becomes a beacon of hope and

encouragement throughout the film. Both Phil and Adeeb become very involved in village protests, often leading the group of villagers and helping to galvanize the villagers into protest. Adeeb, as Burnat remarks on occasion, has a tendency towards drama and is also a more serious, introspective character than Phil. In the midst of years of protest, Adeeb remarks on his chickens roosting in a tree: "They have a coop but they won't go in it. Everyday - wintertime, summertime. They climb the tree every day . . . They have their freedom!" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:24:12). Similarly, Burnat shows, the villagers are resistant to being caged or cooped inside the barrier wall. All three men are passionate in their endeavors to maintain ownership of their lands and resist Israeli occupation.

The documentary is repetitious and painful due to years of protest under occupation with comparatively little result, yet is still interspersed with images of hope, friendship, and family that restrain its tone from utter desolation. The film depicts the ways in which villagers attempt to carry on with their normal life despite the beginning of construction on the wall. The village's olive groves are, however, on the other side of the planned route of the wall, and their regular commute to the grove becomes challenged. This short trek becomes literally fruitless when the villagers are kept from reaching their own land, the olive groves, by the Israeli soldiers. When some of the Palestinians are arrested or beaten in their attempts to reach their land, the villagers decide to take action. Every Friday, they will protest against the construction of the wall that keeps them from their land. The village's sole source of income and sustenance is the olive groves, so they are determined to keep what Israel plans to take from them. During the course of the film, the Palestinians will be joined in their protests by international activists, they will endure night raids by Israeli soldiers coming for their children in order to scare and subdue the

villagers into ending their protests, and the villagers will continue to resist Israeli occupation. The film follows this ongoing protest and resistance.

Eventually, Burnat's youngest son, Gibreel, grows old enough to begin to understand the events in the village and the protests carried out by his family, friends, and neighbors, and Burnat brings him to the weekly protests so that he can watch. Burnat hopes that Gibreel will grow strong, because Burnat is not sure what the future holds for his family or village, and he wants his son to be able to cope. Exposing Gibreel to the conflicts in this way will prepare and strengthen him, and shows Gibreel that the cause belongs to him as well.

The soldiers come into the village more often towards the end of the film to stop the villagers from demonstrating, but the Palestinians are not willing to give up, especially after years of protest. Even when events become bleak and Phil is shot and killed by an Israeli soldier during one of the weekly protests, the villagers are filled with an even stronger impetus to eradicate the wall. Phil's death becomes an important symbol—he represents all of the Palestinians who have suffered or been harmed under Israeli occupation, as well as the hope that can still flourish in the midst of difficulty.

By the end of the film the villagers are successful, and the route of the wall is moved back, allowing them access to their olive groves. However, not all of the land can be restored to its rightful owners. Adeb's lands now lie beneath illegal Israeli settlement buildings, and he will not receive recompense for his land or associated loss. So, Burnat is not entirely satisfied. Bil'in remains under Israeli occupation, and the wall still exists. Burnat's desire to keep filming shows that, for Burnat especially, there is no end to the narrative he is creating—the nature of film in terms of having an ending imposes an unnatural boundary on what Burnat is attempting to create, which is memory, one of those elusive qualities that is difficult to extinguish. At the close of the

film, Burnat purchases a sixth camera: he will continue filming, because the story has not finished.

Five Broken Cameras inspired controversy in the international community upon its release due to its combined Israeli and Palestinian production team, as it challenged the barriers of nationality and nationalism that exist in Israel and Palestine. The film was co-produced by Burnat and Guy Davidi, an Israeli activist and filmmaker who was responsible for the editing and the script. It would be easy or perhaps automatic to interpret the collaboration of an Israeli and a Palestinian as a sort of declaration on reconciliation and the possibility of finding a peaceful compromise. However, the producers have made multiple statements about how their collaboration was entirely circumstantial and coincidental. Davidi says in one interview, "It's not that we work together because we thought, 'Oh! It's going to look very nice to the outside world that there is a Palestinian and an Israeli working together.' . . . It's important to say that for us, it was a very natural thing" (Wood 2). Burnat himself states, "This film is not about a collaboration between Israel and Palestine. I don't like the word collaboration. It means many negative things" (Rogberg 25). Burnat refers to the paranoid socio-political tensions between Israel and Palestine. The Palestinians in particular have had the experience of living alongside people who turned out to be Israeli secret service, planted by the Israeli government, or even just regular Palestinians who decided to cooperate with the Israeli government. Collaboration, in such contexts, has negative connotations. The film expresses a much wider meaning of international collaboration.

The collaboration between Burnat and Davidi caused fear and anxiety throughout both Israel and Arab communities, especially due to political tensions between the two communities. The two men first met in 2005 when Davidi became involved with the Bil'in and other local

protests against the Israeli settlements, and they began working together in 2009. Davidi tells, "We made [the film] together because it was practical" (Rogberg 25). Davidi continues to emphasize that by the time the two had met, "Around eighty percent of the footage we used in the film had already been filmed" (Rogberg 24). Davidi stresses in multiple interviews that the story is about Burnat and his family: "It was important for us to make the film from Emad's perspective" (Rogberg 24). With his involvement in the film and knowing he would be seen only as an Israeli, Davidi had been afraid of inspiring controversy. His national identity could overwhelm any other possible association. As Davidi feared, because an Israeli producer was involved in the film, Israel claimed the film was an Israeli story. On January 11, 2013, the Embassy of Israel tweeted, "Two Israeli films are among the five nominated for best documentary for the Academy Awards" (Embassy of Israel). One of these films was *Five Broken Cameras*; the other was *The Gatekeepers* ("Oscar Legacy"). But Israel's claim to *Five Broken Cameras* was conflicted. On the one hand, the film was screened in the Jerusalem Film Festival, and "it won the best documentary award and it screened on television, it had a nice theatrical release and it's still ongoing, and [it was nominated for an Oscar]" (Flanders). The film was screened in Israel, however, the Israeli embassies were unwilling to show the film, and furthermore the film was banned in Israeli settlements due to its clear pro-Palestine stance. Several Arab countries also banned exhibition of *Five Broken Cameras* due to the film's connections to Israel, and some Palestinians questioned Burnat's close relationship with Davidi (Rohter 1). The tense relationship between Israel and Palestine is fraught with tension, makes it difficult to make a simple statement about the reception of *Five Broken Cameras*.

The film has received tense critique due to its simultaneous strong pro-Palestine stance and being claimed by Israel as an Israeli film. One writer for *The Jerusalem Post* stated, "neither

Israeli nominee reflects my reality of life" (Volpo). She goes on to write, "those feelings of empathy were forced on me" (Volpo). She reads the film as glorifying Palestinian criminals who have been charged with assaulting IDF soldiers, while simultaneously vilifying the soldiers that are responsible for protecting the sanctity of the State of Israel. Nonetheless, "having our own independent state and a Oscar-nominated narrative which not all Israelis are comfortable with, reminds us why it is so important to keep protecting this state and the safety of its citizens" (Volpo). Similarly, Volpo views the film as containing only isolated incidences of violence, instead of being a representative narrative of similar violence committed by the Israeli army throughout the occupied territories. Subsequently, she believes the film serves, in the end, as an incitement to live up to the title of 'World's Most Moral Army': "We should seek opportunities where we can improve, find the most moral way to live in the reality imposed on us" (Volpo). While both sides are culpable for wrongdoing and actions of hatred, it is improper to blame the victim, which is, in this case, the Palestinian. As Davidi stated in one interview, "Israelis are holding on to History. Even if we're the aggressors, we're still the victims. We're caught in a stupid syntax war" (Rogberg 25).

In regards to future possibilities for education and peaceful relationship, Davidi in particular hopes to show the film in Israeli settler colonies, and has taken every opportunity to show the film in Israeli high schools, whenever and wherever he is invited. Davidi stated, "These kids, Israeli kids, are—they're going to be recruited to the military service and they're gonna be posted in positions, and they're going to be brainwashed by the military. So this is the most important time for this generation to try and understand and see what's going on in their country under their responsibility" ("The Story of a West Bank Village"). Davidi continues in one interview in early 2013, "So we're trying to reach the [Israeli] high schools where we are invited .

. . so to get into settlers' high schools will be another challenge later on" ("The Story of a West Bank Village"). The Israeli media presents a much different message to Israeli children than the story *Five Broken Cameras* provides. However, according to the press record, the screening of *Five Broken Cameras* in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank has not been allowed or occurred yet.

Despite the criticism that *Five Broken Cameras* received, the film won several prestigious awards. *Five Broken Cameras* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature at the 85th Academy Awards. The film won the World Cinema Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2012, and also won the Special Broadcaster IDFA Audience Award and the Special Jury Award at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2011. *Five Broken Cameras* also won the Golden Apricot at the Yerevan International Film Festival, Armenia in 2012. The *Guardian* called it "one of the best, most involving documentaries of the past couple of years" (French). The *New York Times* wrote, "There is no shortage of information and opinion about the Middle East, and this film, made collaboratively by Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi, is partly a piece of advocacy journalism. But it is also a visual essay in autobiography and, as such, a modest, rigorous and moving work of art" (Scott). The film's academic critical reception, on the other hand, has not been widespread or overwhelming, for at this point the film has inspired little or no academic work despite its international acclaim.

As Burnat would insist: "The heart of the story and the blood of the story is Palestinian" (quoted in Rohter 2). The story, the characters, the cinematography are Palestinian, and furthermore, the experience represented is a Palestinian one: life under Israeli occupation. The narrative functions performatively as an expression of a national identity that has been ignored.

Burnat did not intend the film for a Palestinian audience: "from the beginning my idea was to make the film for the international community" (Rogberg 26). In this way the film serves as a performative narrative, countering the pedagogical narrative by which it is surrounded. Palestinians, like the villagers in the film, already know what is happening, because it is happening all around them every day. It is the Israeli community and the international community that needs to know what is taking place. The film, as a counter-narrative, contributes to a construction of a nation. Theoretical discussions of nationalism and narrative from the theories of Homi K. Bhabha in particular prove useful to explore how such construction takes place.

Theories of Nation and Narrative

When we refer to a *nation*, we are in fact referring to a complex, multi-layered concept: *nation* is not only a term implying a physical place with borders and common government, but also refers to the structural ideology that inhabits those borders. Nations began taking shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are a unique and modern entity. While large empires have existed throughout the millennia, they have not been organized and ritualized to the same extent as the modern nation. Ernest Renan, writing in 1882 after the French Revolution, laid the foundations for national studies. Renan argues against the teachings of earlier political theorists by removing national definitions relying on dynastic roots, religion, or race, or other false categories. For example, the United States is a nation that was not founded by a dynasty. As for race, Renan argues, "The primordial right of races is as narrow and as perilous for genuine progress as the national principle is just and legitimate" (Renan 13). There is no longer, and perhaps has never been, scientific precedence for a 'pure race.'

Similarly to race, Renan rejects languages as the basis of national identity. Switzerland, despite its multiple dialects, is a nation (16). Besides, languages morph and move with such great speed that national definition by this basis would create a highly unstable nation. Renan continues to argue that religion similarly cannot serve as the basis of national identity because it stems from familial rites that bonded ancient societies, and has less societal influence in modern life. While religion was a useful way of uniting empires, the same rule does not apply to the nation. Another of Renan's arguments relates to geography and boundaries, which are similarly inadequate to define the nation because they are open to fluctuation. Israel's creation of a barrier wall to enforce their borders (and further help to define their nation by this boundary) is an example of this. Justification of national borders simply by means of natural boundaries would invite dispute on all sides and would become highly subjective, as *Five Broken Cameras* eloquently demonstrates. The modern nation is not formed solely on the basis of political affiliation, ethnographic distribution, or natural geographic borders. There must then be a different way of determining the construct of the modern nation-state, something much deeper and more ambiguous. This is evidenced in the fact that, as Renan explains, "Switzerland, which has three languages, two religions, and three or four races, is a nation, when Tuscany, which is so homogenous, is not one" (Renan 12). Similarly, the US is often called a great melting pot—homogeneity misses the mark. There is no scientific means of determining what exactly makes up a nation; instead, the configuration of a nation seems to be something that is largely unspoken.

Through the invention of tradition and the selection of memory, the identity of a given nation-state became standardized. According to Renan, the unifying essence of a nation is "a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound implications of history" (18). This is a way of referring to the bond of experience and national memory, which largely forms national identity.

Renan claims that the nation is its memory, and the nation in this way becomes an imagined construction. Because nations tend to have selective memories, choosing what will and will not be added to the national canon of memory, nations are formed through the will of the people, and through collective memory or loss. The shared will to memory and to hope is one of the most important aspects of nation-building: ". . . the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future . . . the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together . . ." (Renan 19). The mythical identity of the nation is thus constructed through various forms of national memory. A prime example of this is the French Revolution, a time when the common French people rose to institute a form of government that would properly represent them. The actions taken in 1789 in France are memorialized yearly on Bastille Day, when the French celebrate their glorious heritage. Similarly, the typical American family participates in the yearly ritual of preparing a meal together with a turkey and cranberry sauce, and this is a wonderful way of drawing the nation together to remember its past. But the day that Thanksgiving remembers is largely romanticized, an invented legitimization that encourages the American people to claim the land of the nation as their own free land, rather than seeing it as a place of Native American massacre and forced removal. All nations share these principles of bonding, especially as nations are, so to speak, mythically constructed. Consequently, the mythical soul of the nation serves to bind its people together more than any other basis of affiliation.

National memory performs in the interest of "[giving] permanence and solidity to a transient political form," the nation (Brennan 47). Francis Mulhern writes of memory as tradition, in which memory becomes selective: "Tradition, usually said to be received, is in reality made, in an unceasing activity of selection, revision, and outright invention, whose function is to

defend identity against the threat of heterogeneity, discontinuity and contradiction" (253).

National identity converges around a single point: memory. Once nationalized, individuals "as subjects become not a diverse and hierarchical mixture of different manners and customs, but transparent and equal to one another" (During 145).

The birth of the nation has been referred to as a collective national forgetting. Renan claims: "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality" (11). In order to remain proud of one's nation, one must necessarily forget the horrors of the nation's past. The totalization of memory, using selected pieces to define the nation, encourages nationalism. Renan famously wrote of the growth of national memory through "A heroic past, great men, glory . . . this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people" (19). Hope and memory become powerful ties that organize people into national citizens, and the process of selective memory becomes crucial for the people to identify themselves with the nation and helps to solidify the nation-state.

Benedict Anderson's seminal work *Imagined Communities* analyzes the ways in which nations are formed through imaginary ties and conceptions. Anderson builds from Renan's foundation of national memory and elucidates some of the ways this memory can be carried out in daily life. In one example, Anderson talks about the newspaper: "We have seen that the very conception of the newspaper implies the refraction of even 'world events' into a specific imagined world of vernacular readers; and also how important to that imagined community is an idea of steady, solid simultaneity through time" (63). This "steady, solid simultaneity through

time" is perhaps a better definition for the nation than one based on purely political association and common law, and reflects a static and whole memory of the nation (Anderson 63). Anderson thereby emphasizes the imagined, mythical construction of the nation.

The novel in particular "as a composite but clearly bordered work of art . . . was crucial in defining the nation as an 'imagined community'" (Brennan 48). The novel located between the book covers and the film's physical boundaries of beginning and end resembles the borders that came to define the nation. In part due to their interconnected timeline, the novel and the nation respond to each other throughout their histories. Read widely throughout the nation, the novel allowed each citizen to imagine the community that surrounded the individual: "Read in isolation, the novel was nevertheless a mass ceremony; one could read alone with the conviction that millions of others were doing the same, at the same time" (Brennan 52). The novel became a way to further mythologize the nation, by providing a modern epic for the national consciousness, serving a political agenda for the purpose of nationalism and solidifying fragments of national life. As a mythological construct, whether formed by film or the novel, memories are selectively represented, canonized and read throughout the nation. Everyone knows the Huck Finn and the Paul Revere stories of national becoming. The genre of film has, in more recent times, become equivalent to the novel for its power of representing national memory, and sometimes questioning it. Film, like the novel, functions as a clearly bordered work, but also is able to analyze certain ideas of visibility and viewpoint that the novel cannot address in the same manner.

Education plays a crucial role in the standardization of knowledge, and assists in familiarization with national memory. Education serves the totalizing role of creating a singular foundation from which each member of society springs. Eric Hobsbawm writes extensively on

education as a way of consolidating national identity in his work *The Invention of Tradition*. For example, in the United States, education is a method of forced socialization in a standardized curriculum. Throughout schools in the U.S., every child since the 1880's has participated in the daily ritual of flag worship, which is one method of picturing 'Americanism' as a choice (Hobsbawm 280). Those who choose not to participate in the ritual are thus seen as 'un-American.' Furthermore, the educational system in the U.S. provided

. . . A convenient means of social comparability between individuals or families . . . and, on a nation-wide scale, a means of establishing common patterns of behavior and values, . . . and, indirectly, through the institutionalization of the 'old boy', 'alumnus' . . . a strong web of intergenerational stability and continuity Indeed, education in the nineteenth century became much the most convenient and universal criterion for determining social stratification. (Hobsbawm 293)

Education and the novel (as well as film) serve within the national construct to uphold national memory and to create a singular timeline for the nation.

Homi K. Bhabha's view of the nation as a construct is multi-faceted. On the one hand, he would agree with Renan's and Anderson's assessment that the nation is constructed, but Bhabha also interrogates the nation-space as a limiting construct for our modern world. Bhabha sees the identity of a nation as narrated and subsequently constructed by those narrations. This means that the nation for Bhabha is always changing and always due for change; subsequently, nations are falsely reduced to static identities. Nations are constantly changing: "It is from this instability of cultural signification that the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities - modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native' - that cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in its enunciation . . ." (Bhabha *NV* 218). The unstable knowledge pictured here

creates a problem for the nation, because the nation claims to be stable and whole. The national memory that pictures this wholeness is an important mechanism for unifying the people.

Rejection of the national memories would mean rejection of the nation itself, since the two are so intertwined. Those who do not carry the correct memory set find it difficult to participate in the national memory and furthermore have difficulty associating with the nation at all, as Bhabha attributes to migrants. These others will challenge the preconceived memories and traditions of the nation; they are opportunely placed to produce a counter-narrative to expose the fragility of the constructed nation. As Burnat exposes and challenges the authoritative narrative of the Israeli government, which means to keep him and his fellow villagers from their homes and lands, he produces such a counter-narrative. *Five Broken Cameras* thus functions as an exposé and as an evocative memory book of what it means to be Palestinian under occupation, showing an unrecognized but valid representation of identity constructed by narrative.

Bhabha is primarily concerned with stories, as they shape nations and people. Consequently, much of his work ruminates around the central theme of narrative. Bhabha sees nations as their own particular narratives, which he considers in two ways: the pedagogical nation and the performative nation. These entities are distinct and yet also highly intertwined. Rather than a helpful and advantageous conversation, the pedagogical and the performative exist in a state of constant contestation. The pedagogical is the correct, authorized version of the national narrative, a single controlling narrative that defines and explains nations, colonizers, and colonized people. The controlling narrative is certain and static, concealing historical reality in favor of continuity and concrete identity. The performative constantly calls into question that which the pedagogical claims is stable and true. The dialectic between the performative and the pedagogical is also seen as a balance between anxiety and certainties, as the daily, performative

re-imagining of the nation calls into question the real stability of the national pedagogy, a re-imagining that prompts anxiety.

These narrations of the nation occur on two different levels simultaneously. As David Huddart writes of Bhabha's theories, "There is a pedagogical dimension that foregrounds total sociological facts, and there is a performative dimension reminding us that those total facts are always open, and in fact are being subtly altered every day" (Huddart 121). In other words, nations portray themselves as cemented, stolid, static identities, but Bhabha argues that nation identities are constantly shifting and changing, within (and through) the contested space of the nation. This open-yet-closed quality of the nation allows it to be both an imagined community and a historical process. Within the national space, people act in contestation: "The people, like the nation, are a strategy: a rhetorical strategy. This double movement is that of pedagogy and performance, of certainties and anxieties, which always go together" (Huddart 108).

Anjali Gera Roy disentangles Bhabha's understanding of the pedagogic and performative narratives: "By pedagogic, he means the pre-given cultural core nations return to in forming themselves. The performative denotes the construction of the nation as an entity through a conscious act of imagining" (Roy 60). Bhabha rejects the insistence of the pedagogical upon the concrete and authentic original nation.

The enunciative, the subaltern, and the hybrid are ways in which Bhabha insists upon an identity in flux, in opposition and resistance to the concrete nation. The becoming of narrative, the way in which it is formed and lived performatively, is to Bhabha an *enunciation*, "a more dialogic process that attempts to track displacements and realignments that are the effects of cultural antagonisms and articulations - subverting the rationale of the hegemonic moment and relocating alternative, hybrid sites of cultural negotiation" (Bhabha, *LC* 255). The enunciative is

the process of overturning the fixed pedagogical narrative of the nation and subsequently claiming an identity and a culture that exists in flux. As Huddart writes, "If you know only too well where your identity ends and the rest of the world begins, it can be easy to define that world as other, different, inferior, and threatening to your identity and interests. If cultures are taken to have stable, discrete identities, then the divisions between cultures can always become antagonistic" (106). This flux is, as Bhabha begins to disentangle, is hybridity. Hybridity is, as Bhabha writes, "The perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; it is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign—the minus in the origin'—through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization" (Bhabha, *NN* 314). The hybrid overturns expectations and reflects the uneasiness and anxiety of the colonizer. Huddart helps to explain the phenomenon of the hybrid: "In the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomenon; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness" (6). It resists totalization and is instead an element in flux.

Bhabha also employs the concept of the *subaltern*: "the voice of the oppressed peoples falling outside histories of colonialism" (Huddart 6). While colonialism would prefer that histories (and consequently identities) are solid, unchanging entities, the voice of the subaltern exposes the falsity of these solid histories. Instead, the subaltern is the voice of the liminal, the in-between that cannot be pinned down neatly in an articulate history of East and West solely in opposition. Bhabha privileges the subaltern, because it favors "unexpected, hybrid, and fortuitous cultures" over "solid, authentic culture" (Huddart 7). Much like in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's

pivotal essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" the subaltern is a subjugated presence whose agency is questionable, and under debate.

The pedagogical narrative of the nation is shown to be incomplete, especially through the experiences of migrants and exiles such as Bhabha and Salman Rushdie, because there is no place for them within this narrative. When Bhabha speaks of the imagined community of the nation, he is referring also to migrants and exiles and new transplants, for whom home is often an abstract concept instead of a concrete location. The existence of the exile and the migrant is what problematizes *nation* for Bhabha, because these people have no actual place within the confines of the national space. Bhabha considers himself a migrant, and similarly he "privileges the migrant, who straddles several cultures, as representing the postcolonial condition and as being best equipped to write the nation" (Roy 57). The migrant, the displaced, exists in the in-between, not fully accepted or ingrained in any one location or culture, and thus has a unique perspective on national identity.

Minority discourse sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic in-between of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy. It contests genealogies of 'origin' that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority . . . [it] acknowledges the status of national culture - and the people - as a contentious, performative space of the perplexity of the living in the midst of the pedagogical representations of the fullness of life." (Huddart 225)

This fact seems to stem largely from the fact that migrants do not ever feel truly at home. Bhabha writes of his own experiences feeling displaced, noting that the fulfillment of the idea of *home* is never found, but always remains an idealized location somewhere *else*. Bhabha identifies an emergent post-colonial identity of the migrant that is always re-locating and never really at home.

This identity destabilizes and questions the national memory, functioning as an alternate narrative, or counter-narrative.

The certainty of the pedagogical narrative is always under-written with the anxiety of daily change within the nation and narratives that disagree with the controlling narrative, that may challenge or disturb the concrete identity that has been built up to protect the idea of the static nation. The hybrid, in challenging the power of the colonizer's pedagogy, "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Bhabha, *LC* 159). Subsequently, the demeanor of the colonizer (and the controlling narrative) is marked by anxiety. Huddart notes: "For Bhabha's analysis to illuminate the agency of the colonized, as well as the anxiety of the colonizer, that anxiety has to open a space for the colonized to resist colonial discourse" (57). Huddart refers to the openness of the nation, the moments when the colonized become capable of performative discourse through daily action or through conscious protest.

The subaltern and the hybrid are expressed through the daily performative actions of the people. The performative, in the creation of narrative, is a process of writing and re-writing, but in such a way that does not completely obliterate the first draft. Evidence of the original pedagogical nation can still be seen, even as the performative reacts and creates its narrative. Huddart offers a metaphor to understand this phenomenon: "Palimpsests are overwritten, heavily annotated manuscripts, on which earlier writing is still visible underneath newer writing: they offer a suggestive model of hybrid identity" (Huddart 107). Furthermore, this process of writing and re-writing is endless and always in flux, resisting any static assumption of identity. Performing against the pedagogy, the performative creates a space within which the people are

able to participate. Consequently: "The people are both the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy but also the 'subjects' constructed in the performance of narrative" (Roy 65). Since nations are composed, constructed, and changed by narratives, counter-narratives (somewhat like the antithesis to a thesis) speak back to the overarching narrative, disturbing and displacing the authoritative identity of a nation, shattering the national artifice. "The narratives of modernity seem to be coherent and serene in their self-confidence, telling of democratic and technological progress. However, that coherence and serenity are bought at the expense of denying historical reality" (Huddart 9).

The constructed national memory problematizes those who do not fit within this construction. In the case of the native or migrant voice, buried, so-to-speak, beneath the totalizing national memory, the possibility for response to the national memory comes in the form of a counter-narrative. Bhabha writes, "Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (*NN*, 300). The circumscribed boundaries of the nation are called into question through the form of counter-narrative. Counter-narratives expose the construction of a nation that claims to be inherent and true. These counter-narratives do not become new totalizing national memories, but rather serve to disrupt and call into question the shared, fabricated memories that make up the national and pedagogical narrative.

Counter-narratives could then be called *supplementary*, since they function as questions that challenge what was original in a given document. The supplementarity of counter-narrative recalls the palimpsest nature of the performative, constantly being changed and re-written. The supplement also functions to balance a given narrative, as though supplements are "pluses that

compensate for a minus in the origin" (Bhabha *NN*, 305). This supplementary form becomes capable of speaking back to the nation, helping to redefine national memory. Bhabha shows, "The present of the people's history, then, is a practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past . . ." (*NN*, 303). The constructed narrative of the nation, stabilized in its common invented tradition, is problematized by the outside voice, whether that of the migrant, exile, or colonized, even more destabilizing since this interjection can be that of the native, displaced within the context of the *original* nation. The counter-narrative challenges the essential myth of the national memory, calling into question its validity and authority. In the juxtaposition of the Palestinian villagers and the armed Israeli soldiers, the film creates this conundrum for the viewer.

There often exists a fear or an anxiety (on both sides) in challenging the totalizing national memory. To address this anxiety, the role of the colonizer, then, is to perpetrate a new national memory:

To be obliged to forget—in the construction of the national present—is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that *performs* the problematic totalization of the national will. That strange time - forgetting to remember - is a place of 'partial identification' inscribed in the daily plebiscite which represents the performative discourse of the people. (Bhabha *NN*, 311)

In order for the nation to be cohesive and unified, the nation must, again, share a national will and overcome dissension. Bhabha provides his own synthesis of the nation's aim in this regard:

The aim of cultural difference is to re-articulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying *singularity* of the 'other' that resists totalization—the repetition that will not return as the same, the minus-in-origin that results in political and

discursive strategies where adding-*to* does not add-up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification. (NN, 312)

Through Bhabha's examination (or “diagnostics”, as a doctor diagnoses his patient for sickness) of the colonized and Western worlds, he “demonstrates that the West is troubled by its 'doubles', in particular the East. These doubles force the West to explain its own identity and to justify its rational self-image. Western civilization is not unique, nor simply Western, and its 'superiority' is not something that can be confidently asserted when other civilizations are so similar” (Huddart 2). Bhabha seeks to expose the *sameness* of the East and the West, although the West is troubled with anxiety about this *sameness*, and is incapable of admitting its own lack of innate superiority. This same anxiety is visible within any relationship between colonizer and colonized, and similarly within the relationship between Israel and Palestine. Israel's authority, and settlement intrusions in the West Bank, is underwritten with anxiety—the barrier wall is a strong physical reminder of this anxiety. Fearing border dispute and anger from the Palestinian side, Israel found it necessary to surround its state with a physical barrier, reassuring its own claims to history with a physical reminder of force.

The West reassures itself with histories that alleviate the anxiety of the colonizer. This also ensures that the voice of the colonized is not heard. When the totalizing force of the national memory overwhelms a smaller, native population, the narrative from this smaller group can sometimes be characterized by silence. The entirety of colonial discourse surrounds this key point, as Huddart emphasizes when he asks the question, "What does colonial discourse want?"

The answer seems to be, it wants only domination of the colonized. This domination depends on the assertion of difference: the colonized are inferior to the colonizers.

However, colonial authority secretly - rather unconsciously - knows that this supposed

difference is undermined by the real sameness of the colonized population. This unconscious knowledge is disavowed: sameness is simultaneously recognized and repudiated. Importantly, the tension between the illusion of difference and the reality of sameness leads to anxiety. (Huddart 5)

Bhabha recognizes the totalizing power of the nation over anything that is 'other.' When these others form communities within the nation, either socially or through literature, "there emerges a more instantaneous and subaltern voice of the people, a minority discourse that speaks betwixt and between times and places" (Bhabha *NN*, 309). Much like the Palestinians in the West Bank, the power has been displaced and unevenly dispersed. The subaltern voice of the nation is capable of "displac[ing] the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to re-write the history and fiction of the metropolis" (Bhabha, *NN* 6). The subaltern voice thus is capable of disrupting the pedagogical narrative espoused by the colonizers.

One of the ways in which the subaltern gains agency is through mimicry. Mimicry functions as a performative measure of counter-narrative, serving as a tangible interaction between colonizer and colonized that both emphasizes the displacement of the colonized and affords the colonized voice and agency. Mimicry explores national identity, exposes the assumptions in identity, and forces a re-assessment of identity. It can be anti-nationalizing in this way because it mimics and mocks cultural expectations. Mimicry "is an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas. This exaggeration means that mimicry is repetition with difference, and so it is not evidence of the colonized's servitude" (Huddart 57). In Bhabha's work, mimicry serves both as evidence of colonial intrusion and as a method of response for the colonized. Throughout his work, Bhabha emphasizes the agency of the colonized; mimicry is an example of the agency he sees possible for the colonized (Huddart 2).

Mimicry exposes the 'mixed-ness'—hybridity—of cultures. Mimicry is both repetition and re-visibility, but in its actualization by the colonized, mimicry exposes the difference between the colonizer and the colonized. It is an exaggerated form that can often produce an even comic effect due to the differing results of the same actions as employed by colonizer and colonized. In other words, mimicry is a mirror that reflects the grotesque actions and behaviors of the colonizer, through the parodic actions and behaviors of the colonized. Bhabha argues for three valid ways in which mimicry produces agency: purposeful parodic imitation, purposeful honest imitation, and ignorant imitation. Whether or not mimicry functions consciously as a strategy for reclaiming agency, Bhabha believes that the very act of mimicry affords agency, functioning as a critique of the colonizer by the colonized (Huddart 62). Mimicry serves to reclaim agency for the colonized by allowing the colonized to expose the oppressiveness of the colonizers.

Since mimicry functions as a sort of subversive mirror, it creates an element of difference and displacement. It creates what Bhabha terms a differential of otherness, even while the colonized “parrots” the colonizer, the identical action or behavior takes on a whole new meaning.. Huddart emphasizes, "The comic quality of mimicry is important because colonial discourse is serious and solemn" (58). The situation, one of subjugation and reverberation, allows for exposition of meaning. The displacement allows greater attention to be called to the strangeness of the mimicked act or behavior. The repetition of mimicry exposes the fragmentation in the normal, and creates a new, grotesque version of the normal that looks the same, but isn't. Mimicry, even when the colonizer and the colonized are performing the same action, exposes the slippage and the looseness that is otherwise buried within assumptions of identity: mimicry allows the in-between and the hybrid to become visible. Bhabha writes, “Colonial mimicry is the

desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (LC 86). Mimicry exposes the falseness in the original history of the colonizer. The all-encompassing history, or narrative, of the colonizer is shown to have gaps and inconsistencies that ignore the voice of the subaltern. Through mimicry, identity is shown to be something that is much more fluid and imaginary than the colonizing discourse would have the colonized believe. In this way, mimicry empowers the hybrid nature of cultures that Bhabha espouses throughout his theory.

Bhabha's major theoretical concepts, then, inform one another. National identity, constructed through memory, is a form of narrative and can also be challenged by counter-narrative. Hybridity enables counter-narrative and functions within counter-narrative because, as Bhabha writes, "When, faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert" (LC 160). The pedagogical narrative, encapsulating the power of colonial discourse, desires to "fix" identity, pinning it into place, so that change is impossible (Huddart 41). Anxiety underlies the staunch pedagogical narrative that claims to define and order the nation, providing an opportunity for the subaltern voice to expose the fragility of the pedagogical narrative. A new way of thinking about identity becomes possible, an identity that is not static but rather exists in flux. This form of identity is visible in *Five Broken Cameras*, which illuminates anxiety in the pedagogical narrative and preserves a performative counter-narrative of the people.

Analysis of *Five Broken Cameras* Through Bhabha

In opposition to the pedagogical, monolithic history of identity that the nation of Israel is attempting to adopt, Burnat's documentary serves as a counter-point and a counter-narrative. In claiming the land for Israel, Israelis simultaneously insist upon a cultural narrative of identity that provides basis for this claim. Their pedagogical representation of the nation portrays a unified Israeli identity against a common enemy: any offenders of the Israeli state (i.e. the Palestinians whose homes, farms, and places of work intersect too closely with the land Israel claims to make up their state). Part and parcel of this pedagogy is the static division of the wall, literal stone and steel that splits apart and separates two communities, Israel and Palestine. This division becomes problematic because it ignores the flexing and constantly shifting nature that Bhabha envisions in the performative nation. The creation of Burnat's documentary challenges this static division. The mimicry of the Palestinians contributes to the counter-narrative, a narrative that overturns pre-conceived notions of identity. The film is an outlet for this expression and conflict of essentialist identities, that of the pedagogy represented through the Israeli soldiers and the conflicting narrative of the villagers. In the film, the nation is given not only a bounded physical location (as stated by the pedagogical narrative) but is also thrown into contestation by the performative counter-narrative of the Palestinian people. The act of filming creates an illusory distance (and simultaneous intimacy) between the filmmaker and his subject. Furthermore, the juxtaposition in the formatting of the film with content produces uneasiness and expectation: the film mirrors the artifice of national authority with the illusory protection of visibility. In opposition to the static identity Israel portrays, the frames of Burnat's camera are able to expose an unstable artifice. The film captures the daily performative life of a people who are considered nationless, as they combat a national pedagogy that insists their land

is not their own.

The pedagogical is static, like receiving a pre-written and pre-recorded speech on the radio, while the performative is fluid, like comedy improvisation, never the same even two nights in a row. Huddart writes of this phenomenon: "On the one hand, pedagogy tells us that the nation and the people are what they are; on the other, performativity keeps reminding us that the nation and the people are always generating a non-identical excess over and above what we thought they were" (Huddart 109). The pedagogical is an attempt to bind the people and to define the nation within a concrete history, but the people are resistant to this caging and prove it daily with their actions and words. Bhabha's performative includes the daily activities of people, which reshapes constantly what defines a nation and what defines an entity of people. *Five Broken Cameras* is performative, and is in its very nature a performed art. It displays the personality and activity of a people, especially and crucially in response to an overarching pedagogical force. The film shows the daily actions of a people in the midst of pedagogical interpolation and becomes a counter-narrative of the people against the pedagogical nation.

The anxiety of the colonizer is markedly evident in the film with the overreaction of the Israeli soldiers to the protests by the Palestinians (and international activists). Their anxiety is marked by their insistence on the necessity of the wall, which, as Burnat shows, carries two definitions: ". . . what Israel terms 'the security barrier' and Palestinians label 'a wall of separation' " (Rogberg 24). The protests by the Palestinians take place every Friday, and Burnat faithfully films the villagers' march from the village to the location of the wall and/or soldiers, and the subsequent interactions. The villagers are generally pictured as peaceful, entreating the soldiers to consider their actions and the actions of their government, while the soldiers remain stoic, more often than not resorting to physical violence in order to disperse the protesters. While

the speeches given by the protesters are moving and elaborate, "This is our land! It's no use. This is a small village. What do you think? Have you no heart? No family? Every one of you knows that this is village land! You stole my land! Don't do that! I'm telling you!" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:14:21). The responses given by the soldiers tended towards machinistic and short, "You were told not to come here" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:38:21). As though the phrases were all pre-planned, the soldiers are always unmoved by any of the remarks made by the protesters. The soldiers, fully armored and equipped with tear gas and guns, face protestors carrying banners with slogans for peace and waving olive branches. The film perfectly captures the anxiety of national narrative, which repeats the same phrases and tactics to confirm its own hopes for stability. This repetition is seen in the Israeli soldiers' commands to the protestors—simple, unwavering commands with innate authority, like "Stop," and "Get back." The film juxtaposes the mechanical actions of the soldiers with the openness of the villagers in Bil'in.

The uniform of the Israeli soldiers (who are never named or made personal entities) also creates a stark contrast to the Palestinian villagers (with whom the film sympathetically resounds and emotionally reveals). The soldiers, always in full uniform with weapons either in their hands or close at the ready, never express sympathetic emotion. They are always difficult to pick out as individuals, and they function as a group. This is not necessarily unlike the Palestinian villagers, who never come to protests alone (at least as shown on film or as mentioned). However, the Palestinians are easily seen in isolation, as individuals and as human beings. The soldiers seem to exist more as a representation than as a reality. Their bodies are never uncovered or made vulnerable, and their speech is either antagonistic ("If you point that camera at me again, I'll bust it, okay?" [Camdessus, Burnat and Davidi] 00:32:19) or robotic ("The military has declared this area a Closed Military Zone. Anyone found in a Closed Military Zone must evacuate the area at

once . . . You are now in violation of that order." [Camdessus, Burnat and Davidi] 00:52:39). The Israeli army is depicted as a heinous force. At one point during the film, the army carries out night raids, calling upon supposedly random homes and dragging out the villagers' children. The children, crying and disorientated, are caught on camera being escorted to army vehicles in the dead of night. The soldiers are aligned with the pedagogical state, through which they receive their orders. They are impersonal and seem immune to emotional pleas. The film expresses, particularly through the Israeli soldiers, the stable narrative constructed by pedagogy.

The stable narrative is contrasted with the more spontaneous and personal lives of the Palestinian villagers. The documentary expresses a mixing of identity, exposing an impurity or a flux in national identity. Burnat's wife, a Palestinian, was born and raised in Brazil, and as Burnat expresses in the film's voiceover, each of his children experienced a different 'era' of Palestine during their childhoods:

Each boy is a phase of our lives. Each boy experienced a different childhood. Mohamad, our eldest, was born in 1995, in the time of hope after the Oslo Peace Accords. In his childhood, things were more open. We could go to the sea every summer. Yasin was born 3 years later, in a time of uncertainty. The very day the Intifada began in 2000, Taki-Ydin was born. The hospital was full of the dead and wounded. His childhood was shaped by the long siege the West Bank was under. In February 2005, Gibreel was born.

(Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:06:05)

There is no static national identity, as evidenced by the difference in the state of the nation throughout the children's childhoods.

The film creates an imagined community through its very form as a visual and "clearly bordered work of art . . . crucial in defining the nation as an 'imagined community' " (Brennan

48). The edges of the film, so clearly defined by start and finish, mimic the localized structure of the nation. Nation and film can be compared structurally as competing narratives. Film functions expressively as a performative narrative, both exposing the pedagogical nation and countering it. The nature of the film provides a particular frame from which the action may be judged, and allows a wider audience than simply the direct participants to experience the consequences of the soldiers' and protesters' actions. The protesters gain acknowledgment and support through their visibility in the media (some of this media support is specifically acknowledged in the film itself, as the film plays a dual role of both media and presentation of media). Bhabha expresses the usefulness of the performative: "Suddenly, in painting, dance, or cinema you rediscover your senses, and in that process you understand something profound about yourself, your historical moment, and what gives value to a life lived in a particular town, at a particular time, in particular social and political conditions" (Huddart 139). The film does this for Burnat by giving him a new angle from which to view conflict. By preserving his memories on film, Burnat preserves his own identity in the midst of voices that would wish to drown him out.

The structure of the film provides both narrative and counter-narrative. The narrative, that of the pedagogical Israeli government, is shown in particular through the Israeli soldiers, who are the representations of pedagogy in the film. The counter-narrative, then, is Burnat's own experience, especially as it alters the expected narrative and resists simplification by the Israeli soldiers. Burnat's view of his village is unlike any other, because it is his particular experience. He is not claiming to have the authoritative perspective on Palestine or on the experience of Palestinians under Israeli occupation, but he cannot deny his own experience, and its relevance to other villages in Palestine at the time. "Our idea was to make a film from my point of view because I live in the village. I can tell the story better than outsiders . . ." (Rogberg 25). The

visibility of the insider's view on the nation's becoming shapes it. Burnat's narrative becomes an expression of his nation, the Palestinian people, and his own national becoming. The film expresses the unity and common will of the Palestinian people, and their efforts against a totalizing narrative that would bulldoze them from being a people at all.

The counter-narrative of the film is built by instances of mimicry, which occurs when the Palestinian protesters (along with Israeli and foreign activists) consciously mimic Israeli strategies. In one such technique, the Israeli settlers place trailers on Palestinian land—even though such an act is illegal according to Israeli law. Once the trailers have been placed, the land is claimed (though the legality at this point is questionable), and the settlers will build concrete structures, which by law the army cannot destroy. Burnat states in his voiceover of the film, “We can't keep the settlers from putting down their trailers. So we have another idea. Why not put down our own trailer on our stolen land on the other side of the barrier?” (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:27:43). The soldiers remove the trailers, but the film shows the repetition of building and re-building, most notably in the “out-post” or “hang-out”—the simple concrete structure erected by the villagers. Mimicry functions as a mirror. In reflecting the actions of the settlers and the soldiers, the attempts of the protesters are refracted. Because the protesters use the exact same techniques used by the Israeli colonizers yet achieve extremely different results, these instances are mimicry. This action, the mimicking of the colonizer's tactics, is not unconscious or monkeyish. Instead, in the context of the film it serves to expose the responses of the settlers when their enemies, the Palestinians, use their own tactics. The Israeli settlers become angry, and the rules are not the same when the perpetrator is a Palestinian. The film is not clear on Burnat's expectations at this point on whether or not the protestors expect this mimicking to afford them the same level of protection as the Israeli settlers; however, the viewer

assumes the tactics will not serve Burnat and the protesters in the same way the settlers are benefitting from these tactics.

The outposts are destroyed again and again, yet the protesters rebuild because this gives them hope and because they don't have another option. "It's impressive," Burnat states in the voiceover, "how Phil and Adeeb can raise morale even when things seem hopeless" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:36:09). While the villagers rebuild a single structure, huge settler buildings go up on the horizon. Even Phil has trouble staying optimistic the entire time: "What can we do? They're gobbling up all our land, Emad. They'll never take down the wall if they can keep building the settlement. It's all for nothing!" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:37:13). The settlers have a great deal of power and backing—with an army, they don't have to be in the right because villagers with rocks and flags cannot compete. While the resistance of the Palestinian villagers takes peaceful form for the most part, the Palestinian villagers do take action to challenge the illegal Israeli settlements scattered throughout the West Bank (several of which are visible from Bil'in). Forming lines, the villagers face off towards the Israeli soldiers, forming a human barrier to challenge the creation of a stone barrier. This subtle mimicry questions the unnatural separation of people. The changelessness of the repetition calls to attention the film's fragmentation: it is set in an open loop of signification. While the sum of the protests achieve a greater distance from the village for the wall to be built, the repetition of the building and re-building does not in itself seem to garner much effect. The law for Palestinians is a broken thing that does not equally support its constituents. The clear juxtaposition exposes the imbalance in the system. These acts of mimicking become parodic displays of self-definition.

The two peoples, Israeli and Palestinian, become starkly differentiated when tactics that work for one will not support the needs of the other, when one's land is protected in favor of the

other. The impotence of the protesters could not be made any starker, despite their use of the same tactics as the settlers. Placing trailers, building concrete structures; the Palestinians are not considered in the same way as the Israelis. If the identical tactics don't accomplish the identical results, then scientifically there should be other factors that throw off the equation. Through this mimicry, the Palestinians ask, what are we? This form of protest calls particular focus to the unfair treatment of the Palestinians by the Israeli occupiers. The settlers throughout the scope of the film successfully used this illegal tactic, while the trailers placed by the villagers were quickly removed, whether or not the villagers locked themselves inside the trailer. (Protestor: "There are people inside! There are people inside!" [Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:28:00]) In the process of becoming a legitimized people in the shadow of the colonizer, their mimicry serves as an outcry. The imitation, in this instance, is not flattery.

Burnat's filming functions as a form of personal enunciation, his own personal counter-narrative to the pedagogy. While Burnat presumably took up filming as a hobby, he quickly became irreparably attached to his cameras. In the film, he mentions this attachment. Filming becomes a form of documentation that enriches Burnat's life, and even more a source of personal testimony. He states at one point that through film he is able to find truth, although he also finds that any truth as stability is an illusion. The camera becomes an extension of him, a means of memory as well as of protest. When he is kept under house arrest, he continues to film, even if there is very little to film. Burnat captures footage of himself, the bedroom, glimpses out of the window and across the land. His insistence on continuing to film appears almost as an obsession of control. Burnat's footage is stark, yet intimate, exposing his own instability when under house arrest. Burnat spends three months in near-solitary confinement. More than anything else, filming becomes a method of survival and coping.

His act of participation through film becomes a performative act of self-definition. Even as his brother (and other family members) get arrested, Burnat keeps calm and continues filming because he knows that the images he captures will be more important than physical action against the Israeli soldiers. Burnat states in the film, "I keep thinking, 'What should I do?' I have to believe that capturing these images will have some meaning" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:43:55). The camera becomes a protective screen between him and the outside world. It is as though he thinks viewing the world from a smaller screen creates a barrier between that world and him, even though he knows this idea is a fallacy. Instead, filming allows him to cope with the difficult circumstances he has found himself in, and it helps him to heal. Burnat states in the film,

Healing is a challenge in life. It is a victim's sole obligation. By healing, you resist oppression. But when I'm hurt over and over again, I forget the wounds that rule my life. Forgotten wounds can't be healed. So I film to heal. I know they may knock at my door at any moment. But I'll just keep filming. It helps me confront life and survive.

(Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 1:27:09)

No matter how he hides behind the camera, his world remains right in front of him and ready to be captured. The camera becomes an extension of Burnat, and he begins to feel that he is unable to tell the truth without it. Filming affords him a simultaneous agency and faux-feeling of distance and protection from consequences. Nonetheless, he himself acknowledges that the protected feeling he gains from filming is false and illusory: "When I film," Burnat states, "I feel like the camera protects me. But it's an illusion" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:43:26).

Burnat's filming revolves around his family, but often he must disobey or forsake the good of his own family in order to pursue a national cause in defense of human rights. In one

interview, Burnat stated, "Of course I worry about [Gibreel]. I was filming and I put my life at risk. This is what my goal was and this is what my purpose was, to show the world what's going on here and to show my life and the situation. So, maybe I can make change or maybe make peace for him in the future" (Flanders). While he encourages his son, Gibreel, to become involved in the protests, at the same time he ignores his wife's pleas to quit filming and to quit risking his life with his camera. Soraya, Burnat's wife, entreats Burnat right after he is released from house arrest: "But, Emad, it's a holy day. No, not today! Haven't you had enough problems? Don't go! I want us to be together. It's a holy day. There's no demonstration. Enough with the filming!" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:56:55). But immediately after this scene, Burnat is heading to the protest, chatting with other filmmakers. Burnat postpones immediate good in the hopes of future betterment, while his family understandably would prefer he not risk his life. The viewer begins to understand Burnat's dedication to this filming and this work. The film must go on, and who better to tell the story of Bil'in than Burnat, a native invested in the future of the land and the people? Carrying a camera endangers Burnat's life, but it also enlivens him. As Bhabha writes of this phenomenon, "Those discriminated against may be instantly recognized, but they also force a re-cognition of the immediacy and articulacy of authority - a disturbing effect that is familiar in the repeated hesitancy in the colonial discourse when it contemplates its discriminated subjects" (Bhabha, *LC* 160). Capturing incendiary footage often makes him a target for the soldiers and for the government. Soldiers shoot four out of his five cameras, and Burnat is arrested and later targeted with a warrant for his arrest. Filming nonetheless helps him feel powerful, and this power is engendered through his work.

The repetition within the film itself creates a fragmented loop of memory, and one part of the conflict of memory that Bhabha argues occurs within national identities. The overwhelming

nationalizing rhetoric encourages forgetfulness in order to unite a national will. Minority and marginal voices are overrun by this obligation, and the ongoing fear of obliteration of memory can be seen in Burnat's obsession with filming. He offers a counter-narrative and a counter-identity to the pedagogical. The pedagogical narrative has constructed an image of society that Burnat's film challenges, and that Burnat feels the need to capture on film in order to preserve his counter-identity. There are instances of protest that the protesters (as well as Burnat himself) are drawn to cyclically. Burnat himself runs into the midst of the action whenever there is a stir, like a fly to a light. He fears a loss of capture, as though not having the moment on film would make it cease to exist. Beneath an overarching pedagogical narrative, Burnat's fear of the loss of memory is strongly related to his fear of loss of identity. With his camera, he is able to capture moments that the pedagogical narrative would otherwise insist do not happen. In an interview with *Cineaste* magazine, Burnat states,

The camera has become connected to me. I cannot go outside without my camera . . .

Without the camera nobody would know. Sometimes something happens, like when Ashraf was shot. There was a lot of controversy after the footage was shown in the news media. Many things like this happen every day, but there are no cameras around. In that case, the camera was there. The camera is a powerful witness. (Rogberg 27)

Visibility creates memory and reveals hybridity throughout the film. The film asks, "If an act of protest is performed and there are no lasting witnesses, can it have a real effect?" The camera provides necessary agency and voice, even to the point of becoming a character in the film itself. The film creates a new dimension of observance and self-awareness in its form, both watching the action and being watched by the viewers of the film, similarly to the hybrid it reverses the gaze of power: "[hybridity] reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn

the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Bhabha, *LC* 159). While the pedagogical narrative attempts to pin identity onto something known and rational, the Palestinian villagers will always have the power to respond, and even a glance holds power. Huddart writes on the loop of signification involved in this encounter:

. . . Visual identification might always hold out the fantasy of full and stable identity, but that identity is immediately threatened by loss because visual identification is part of a circulation of relations rather than a one-way fixed relation. If you stare at people it might seem that you have fixed them in place, but of course they will always look back and threaten your sense of self: in other words, self and other are locked together. (Huddart 44)

The hybrid exists in the place in between, just beyond the bounds of recognition. Any undue separation of self and other, and the other becomes frightening and threatening to the self, which inspires conflict and hatred. Through understanding, the other becomes known, less frightening and more friend.

A growing expression of hybrid identity within the film is seen in the children. The children play a key role in the film and also in the future of the conflict. The Palestinian children become involved in the protests, holding signs, chanting, and appearing at the outpost the villagers constructed. Because of the involvement of the children in the night raids, the children become more prominent in the marches and protests of the villagers. Spurred on by the Israeli army, the children chant slogans such as, "We want to sleep" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 00:47:05). The children become more involved in the cause of the village, and they become aware of the "unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority" (Bhabha, *LC* 245). The children find it natural to protest with their

families and neighbors. They are just as willing to defend their land as their adult counterparts. The children, while they are too young to be reasonably involved in clashes with soldiers, cannot be removed from the entire situation. In the film, Burnat states,

Someone is shot dead in Nil'in, a nearby village. So we all go to show our support. In the middle of the chaos in Nil'in, they take Daba and shoot him in the leg. The soldiers use lots of gas and live ammunition. Snipers surround the village . . . An 11-year-old boy is killed in Nil'in. Snipers shot him near his home. Immediately after the funeral, a 17-year-old boy is also killed . . . I'm thinking about my children. I want to protect them. But the occupation always catches you off guard. (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 1:00:33)

This points to the ways that the children are the future. However, Burnat fears what these memories will do to his children. Gibreel, for instance, is too young when his friend Phil is killed by soldiers to understand the correct response to such a tragedy. He asks his father, "Daddy . . . why don't you kill the soldiers with a knife?" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 1:21:00). Gibreel, who is about four years old, still thinks like a child, and the distress and confusion he feels are difficult to resolve. Burnat struggles with the question, "How will they [the children] be able to bear their anger?" (Camdessus, Burnat, and Davidi 1:22:09).

While Palestinian children make up much of the focus of the film, the viewer can recall Davidi's statements in interviews about the importance of educating the Israeli children about the conflict, as they will become the next generation of Israeli soldiers occupying the villages of Palestinian children. Burnat and Davidi both strive to gain a higher level of engagement and understanding from the children, both Israeli and Palestinian alike. Burnat does so within the film, with his own children and especially with Gibreel. Davidi focuses, outside the film, on the Israeli children. In order to expose the inequality and censorship of the Israeli media, Davidi

screened *Five Broken Cameras* in 2013 to a group of Israeli high schoolers in Windows, an alternative youth educational program, with evocative results. For most, if not all, of the students, *Five Broken Cameras* changed the way they viewed the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and especially what they thought of Israeli censorship. The Israeli children had been brainwashed and prepared for obligatory military service. To show this, Davidi juxtaposed an Israeli military visit to an Israeli high school with his own screening of *Five Broken Cameras*. In one high school in Tel Aviv, military personnel stated,

[Speaking of an air attack performed by the Israeli military] This operation is a cooperation of all the ground forces and the air force. Our goal is to establish an affinity to the military and as a way also to prevent any evasion of military service. To raise the motivation to go ahead with the obligatory service in the army and also to celebrate all the great achievements of Israel to strengthen the national pride . . . So we had here values that guide us, for instance unity, the minute you see everyone is united you then can win. If we set to ourselves a goal and we persist to get it, we will do all we can to get it. (Davidi 4:33:00)

Davidi himself evaded military service after three months of being drafted and so has stated that he understands the pressure many students feel to serve their country by serving in the military forces (Flanders). Many students mentioned to Davidi after the screening that they had no idea that events like those of *Five Broken Cameras* were happening, and many were sickened by the actions of the Israeli army. The censorship of the government was evidenced by the students' collective shock at the actions of the soldiers towards the Palestinians and activists. Davidi specifically targeted the high school age group because they were at a crucial developmental age, and also just a few years shy of being drafted into obligatory service in the Israeli armed forces.

One student shares his reaction to the film, saying, "It's a very despairing reality, and the fact that every Friday they go out to protest is inspiring . . . We are in their [the children's] age and if we were living in Bil'in they [Israeli soldiers] would knock on our doors at night to tell us we threw stones. So why? Just because I was born a few miles over the other side?" (Davidi 01:44). The student's reaction exposes the tenuous and arbitrary demarcation of the West Bank Barrier Wall. *Five Broken Cameras* allowed this student to see personal faces of Palestinians, eradicating the mental barrier between self and other. As Davidi comments in interviews, the Israeli children will not change their viewpoint if they do not see the media change to incorporate the experiences and realities of both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides. Both Burnat and Davidi are concerned about the future generations: "The national narrative, in its forms of knowledge, is exemplary of larger educational questions. It does not matter who claims such knowledge, for it is the non-processual nature of that knowledge, claiming to know all it needs to know, to grasp the nation as it is and always will be, that is the problem" (Huddart 120). The children must be educated to change both themselves and their respective communities in order to create peace.

Five Broken Cameras enacts a collective memory of performative Palestinian identity. Bhabha's theories elucidate the key relationships and tensions within the film, making it possible to see the film as counter-narrative in response to an overarching pedagogical narrative. Without Bhabha's analysis, the film may be seen as a self-serving, one-sided perspective of conflict. Certainly some Israeli reviews of the film have concluded as much. However, Bhabha's idea of the hybrid, which in itself is a concept that resists definition and totalization, becomes enacted through the film as a response to the power of colonial discourse and pedagogy. Hybridity helps to reveal the anxiety of the colonizer and to reveal the pedagogical narrative as something other than it claims to be. The film's counter-narrative, constructed through pivotal instances of

mimicry and protest, becomes a representation of Palestinian national becoming. In the midst of this national becoming, Burnat's children represent the future of the nation and the future of international relations through the construction of memory and in response to the pedagogical narrative. The hybrid knowledge the children inhabit becomes integral to the course of any future Palestinian nation. With the displacement of the pedagogical present, the nation becomes open to alternate, perplexing histories.

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Integration of Faith and Learning

One of the core conflicts within *Five Broken Cameras* stems from a long-standing mistrust between peoples, originating between Isaac and Ishmael. The conflict could not be simplified into an entirely Biblical or religious one, but these factors do exist beneath and within the identities of these two groups as a unique palimpsest of Israeli and Palestinian identity. Each claim the land due to long-standing history with the area, and both are in some ways unwilling to reconcile their differences. Peace is at the heart of all Biblical teaching, and this research reveals the failure of Biblical peace in this instance. In Hebrews, Paul emphasizes that not all followers of Christ must be Jews, and that Christianity is also open to a Gentile audience. Furthermore, Paul writes in Hebrews 12:14, “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Reconciliation for the Israel-Palestine conflict can only happen if both sides are willing to be peaceful and holy in regards to one another. It is my hope that, as per Christ’s multiple examples, the Israelis and the Palestinians will be able to embrace one another someday as brothers and sisters, setting aside disagreement and difference but sharing in each other and in the land prosperously.