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Limits to the Self: Revisiting the Jewish Wandering Syndrome in Eshkol Nevo's *Neuland*

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ABSTRACT

The notion of self attends to individual identity in relation with meaningful social interactions. It is a system expanded to multidisciplinary paradigms, often discussed in psychological and sociological perspectives. Man as a social being is entitled to understand and accept the social significance of self which is also an outgrowth of accumulated experiences of the past. However, this process is challenging especially to the members of a community with an unusual record of history. To that end, this paper attempts to examine the case of Israeli Jews for the complexity in their identification of self even after the establishment of Israel as a Nation State. Israeli writer Eshkol Nevo's most discussed novel *Neuland* is closely read to engage with the concept of self in the Israeli context and to accentuate its centrality among the new generation Jewish Israelis. Based on the socio-psychological theoretical frameworks, specifically of William James, *Neuland* is synthesized as a textual journey to subjective and social identifications of the notion of self. The causes and consequences of limits to self and its problematic representation among a particular group of Jewish Israelis as manifested in the text are subjected to textual interpretation.

KEYWORDS

Israeli Jews, self, identity, wanderism, social interaction

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The establishment of a sovereign Jewish State in the ancient *Eretz Yisrael*[1] discloses the dramatic Jewish victory in one of the excruciating battles human race has ever witnessed. Israel, the decisive hope of persecuted diasporic Jews exposed to the threat of annihilation, embodies Jewish spirit and determination. Israeli historian Anita Shapira states, "the Jews were presented as powerless and without a homeland – two essential deficiencies that the national movement aspired to remedy" (354). The identification of a national landscape became the prior necessity of the Jewish sentiment to frame their political actions, social thought and cultural creativity as envisaged by Theodor Herzl[2] about a Jewish Utopia in which "ideas about the establishment of a Jewish state were shaped by conceptions of progress in a global community of enlightened peoples, a world in which problems were solved by reason and common agreement" (Shapira 354). The collective Jewish aspirations were actualized through the Zionist[3] movement in the latter part of the 19th century that propelled the immigration of Jewish refugees to Mandatory Palestine which eventually led to the establishment of the State of Israel. The State of Israel reflects the obstinacy of a unique ethnic group to survive and flourish in a land which is central to their history and collective identity. A new type of "Jew" was meant to emerge in Israel "with all its ambivalence towards the use of force" and "the attitude towards the land gradually lost its "conceptual" dimensions and became more "down-to-earth" in nature" (Shapira 370). The land prospered acquainting Israel as the historic birthplace of Jews, gratifying "the role Palestine had fulfilled in Jewish history" (Sachar 311). Sachar notes that Israel was "open to all Jews who wished to enter, would extend social and political equality to all its citizens without distinction of religion, race, or sex, and would guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, education and culture to all" (311). But what is the nature of Jewish life in Israel after the solidification of the State of Israel? How does the *sabra* (a Jew born in Israel) shape his/her life in the new State? Did Israel fulfil its mission of a Jewish settlement? This paper attempts to discuss the discrete methods of adaptation opted into by young native Israelis to confront the difficulties in identifying "self" amidst the social newness of Israel. Eshkol Nevo's *Neuland* in its realistic portrayal of the problematic phase of being an Israeli Jew delineates the complexities of everyday life, demonstrations of escapist tendencies and its consequences among the new generation Israelis.

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[1] *Eretz Yisrael/Israel* means the Land of Israel. However, the term is not exclusively geographic rather it is used to address the Israelite tribes established by the children of Jacob. For more information, refer Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Land of Israel: From Holy Land to Homeland* (2012).

[2] Herzl is the father of political Zionism which formed the Zionist organization and promoted Jewish immigration to Palestine.

[3] Zionism is the Jewish national movement developed in the nineteenth century eastern and central Europe for the protection of Jews by establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. For more details, refer to Jacques Kornberg's book *Theodor Herzl – From Assimilation to Zionism* (1993).

Nevo, named after his grandfather Levi Eshkol, the third Prime Minister of Israel, stands unique in his literary modality by employing objectivity and rationality as narrative styles. His position in the modern Israeli literature is pellucid when placed in the larger canvas of Israel's literary arena.

The foundations of literary achievements in modern Israel lay back to the group of literary pioneers from the second *aliyah*[4] between 1904 and 1914. Later in 1921, the Hebrew Writers' Association was established in Tel Aviv marking the beginning of abundant literary production with major focus on the predicament of Jewish people. When the first generation Israeli writers were highly influenced by the classical writers of the Hebrew revival, the next generation of writers symbolized the rootlessness of diasporic Jews. The third generation of writers experimented with exploring national ethos as they emerged during the time of the Israeli war of Independence. In the 1960s, Israeli literature flourished with its unique aspects of Jewish life and identity. The following generation curiously divulged into the collective consciousness of Israel by examining the changing modes of engaging with the notion of nation since the consecutive wars that the State had to fight for survival altered collective perceptions of nationality. Eshkol Nevo (born in 1971), belonging to the new generation of Israeli writers, has been highly influenced by his literary fathers, Amos Oz (born in 1939) and A.B. Yehoshua (born in 1936). He deliberates on the Jewish question of identity and attempts to place the notion of "wandering Israeli" in the narratives of modern Israeli society.

Nevo's *Neuland* was first published in Hebrew by Kineret Zmora Bitan in 2011. The novel was translated to English by Sondra Silverston in 2014. *Neuland* spectacles the physical and psychological journey undergone by Jewish Israelis amidst Israel's collective efforts to build a new type of Jew who is secular, progressive and enforced by instinctive and creative vitality (Shapira 355). The prototypical embodiment of the new Jew is complex with problematic identity, manifested in the portrayal of *Neuland*'s protagonists Dori and Inbar. Dori is a teacher by profession which he belittles against the exalted image of his father Menny who is a war hero of Israel. He is also trapped in an unhappy marriage with a difficult relationship with his son. Dori sets on a journey when his father goes missing but turns out to be a self-seeking endeavour. Inbar has also encountered similar familial issues. Inbar's problematic relationship with her mother Hannah is intensified with the suicide of her brother during his service in the army. This tragic incident escalates Hannah's anger and disappointment towards Israel to the extent that she leaves Israel for Germany, the country where her ancestors were brutally murdered during the Holocaust.

[4] *Aliyah* in the Israeli context infers to the waves of immigration of diasporic Jews to then Palestine.

Inbar's perplexed self is caught between her Israeli identity and her mother's antithetical detachment from Israel. Both the characters represent the confused new generation of Israelis whose dubious association with Israel impel them to search for alternatives to postpone Israeli reality. However, there exists an undeniable psychological longing for a return to the roots which is in conflict with their inability to identify her own self, amidst the expectations and historical underpinnings of being native Israelis.

In this essay, *Neuland* is construed as a spiritual travelogue portraying the desperate attempts of two Israelis to identify their complicated self, caught amidst the expectations and realities of Israel. The paper discusses the following arguments by elaborating on the political and psychological disputes encountered by the protagonists of the novel.

i. What is the significance of defining self?

ii. How can limits to the self obstruct communal existence?

iii. What are the causes of detachment inflicted upon modern Israeli society?

iv. What is connection between the Jewish traumatic past and the divergent Israeli present?

The creation of a collective national identity was inexorable to extinguish the "Jewish longing for national grandeur, dignity, and an equal status among the nations of the world" (Shapira 355) and the fulfillment of this aspiration did achieve an independent democratic State for the Jewish refugees from all over the world. However, the process of settlement in Israel was not facile. The memories of the diasporic past, cultural shock of immigration, geographical differences, conflict with the Palestinian communities and the hostility of neighbouring countries continue to disrupt the process of the creation of a unified Israeli identity.[5] The emergence of wandering/backpacker culture in Israel on the other hand was antithetical to the prototypical image of the *sabra.*6 Professor Yael Zerubavel theorises this anomalous combination by reflecting on the agonising aspect of *yerida. Yerida* refers to the emigration of Jewish people from Israel, as opposed to *aliyah* which is the immigration of Jewish people from the diaspora to the land of Israel. The *sabra* was designed to be entrenched in Israel and the notion of wandering was supposedly the inevitable trait of the Jews of diaspora. But the unusual combination of *sabra* with wandering, says Zerubavel, protrudes an ideological crisis that ignites the urge to perform *yerida* despite their seemingly accomplished Israeli lives and unravels the painful realisation of incongruity between the vision of Israel's founding fathers and the reality of their sons (127-128). This unfortunate disparity which Zerubavel has observed in

[5] There have been contested narratives on the inclusivity and exclusivity of Jewish past and trauma in the Israeli public sphere. See Yael Zerubavel's "The "Mythological Sabra" and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities."

[6] For more discussions on *sabra* ideology refer to Almog Oz's book *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*.

Israeli society during the 1980s is still relevant and recurring as it is the major theme in Nevo's *Neuland* published in 2011. This paper attempts to decipher the mystery of the wandering Jew by placing the notion of self at the center of its narrative. The self as an internal environment (Charon 72) is analyzed and limits to its facets are identified to be the latent forces behind what Zerubavel calls the *yerida*.

Neuland's protagonists Dori and Inbar are perplexed by their problematic Israeli identities. Both experience disconcert and seek emotional rejuvenation by dissociating themselves from the Israeli reality despite their seemingly promising lives. They follow the trails of Israeli backpackers and undergo a journey that seeks to solve their existential predicaments in Israel. Dori finds his life meaningless with an unrelieved teaching job and an impassive marital life. Inbar, on the other hand, is hopeless about her stilted relationship with her mother. They are incapacitated from experiencing their lives which, as Zerubavel indicates, ignites their urge to leave. The land of Israel appeared inconsequential before them as they perceived insensitive premonitions regarding their future in Israel. Dori's father, a war veteran and a grief-stricken widower, goes missing and Dori decides to go in search of him. But deep within, he realises that he certainly seeks his lost self through the journey. Inbar does not return to Israel from her visit to her mother in Germany, rather she transits to South America as she could not feel home at Israel. The paths of destiny unite them, and together they unfold their selves and identities which cannot be severed from their Israeli roots.

The significance of self in establishing societal interactions that are productive confide within the norms of "mutual recognition and communication between individuals in a society" (Itzigsohn and Brown 232). Self can be theorized as an ongoing social process which is inevitable to construct and reconstruct the meaning of identity through the acts of social interactions. Man's realization of self is attained when it is capable of identifying and distinguishing oneself from others, as the act of self-discovery is intensely associated with an individual's competency to identify the space that extricates his/her self from the self of the others. But the recognition of self is limited when one denies mutual recognition and appreciation, leading to the ruination of a healthy environment. The process of self-formation is prominent in creating a dynamic society with productive social groups (Hiller 190). Therefore, the discovery of individual identity or the self is crucial in establishing a social background which is satisfying and meaningful.

The notion of self and identity are seemingly conflicted in Israeli society. Israeli Jews constitute a social group with a shared culture based on the sense of a common history but the formation of collective identity is still an ongoing process in Israel as the society is heterogeneous in nature.[7] The native Jews of Israel, unlike their preceding generation, were not

bewildered by the cultural shock of immigration. They were rooted in Israel and the formation of their identity was supposed to be uncomplicated. But the emergence of the backpack culture, especially among the young Israeli Jews, provides distressing evidence to the problematic nature of being a *sabra* and the disillusionments associated with that reality. Similar to the memories of the Holocaust which "remains a basic trauma of Israeli society" (Elon 198-199), the syndrome of wandering Israeli as Zerubavel defines it, inverts the foundations of the Zionist project and extends Israel's existential dilemmas. The acts of wandering or even the desire to get away are symbolical associates of limits to the process of self-identification and the inability to merge into the social group. It is significant for an individual to experience the reality of self to attain the state of fulfillment as he/she is expected to identify themselves not only with their individual identities but also with the collective identity of their social group. However, self-formation in social groups is challenging as an individual needs to acknowledge the self associated with the group as the process of developing "social selves emerge through mutual recognition between people and from the internalization of the images that the other carries of us" (Itzigsohn and Brown 233). In *The Principles of Psychology*, William James deliberates on the concept of self.

> No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke or minded what we did, but if every person we met "cut us dead" and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruelest bodily tortures would be a relief; for those would make us feel that, however bad might be our plight, we had not sunk to such a depth as to be unworthy of attention at all. (293)

James argues that a human's behavior is interconnected with how he/she identifies him-/herself in a social group and how he/she aligns his/her social selves demanded by the group. He also claims that being invisible and unacknowledged by the members of the society is the worst punishment one can ever experience. Identifying oneself with a non-existing entity can cause a devastating impact on the formation of self as self is developed from the internalization of views that others have of us. A cogent analogy can be observed in *Neuland* where the protagonists dissent their inability to explore and place their individual self amidst the social requirements of the state. Dori's and Inbar's *sabra* image and their contradicting social actions reflect the ideological crisis corresponding to the discrepancy in the Zionist dream of native Israelis. But the psychological predicament behind the wandering syndrome results from a disoriented and ambivalent liaison between Israel and the native Israelis. Both Dori and Inbar are convoluted in

[7] Israeli society constitutes of Jews from different origins (Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Mizrahim), Arab Israelis, Arab Christians and other citizens. See Moshe Semyonov's *Stratification in Israel: Class, Ethnicity and Gender*.

ascertaining emotional legitimacy and meanings in their lives in Israel. Detached from Israeli reality, they suffer seclusion which ignites their desire to seek alternates through wandering. Passages like the one below abound.

> And many times, she'd left lonely here. Of all places. Many times, she'd felt that there was not a single person in the group who was close to her. And as she stood in front of the closed gate, the smell that filled her nostrils was the smell of loneliness. And the taste on her lips was the bitter taste of the longing to finally be understood. Not desired or admired. Understood. By one person, at least. (Nevo 209)

Inbar echoes the *sabra* dilemma caught between national expectations and Israeli reality. She is emotionally detached from the land and finds her life meaningless in Israel. She is discontent about her identity being associated with the land and argues that Israel has shattered its people by transforming them into an impassive populace perplexed about their future amidst the wars and bloodshed. Being born to the first generation migrants of Israel, Inbar was subjected to chaotic domiciliary, causing limitations to her identity formation. She was left alone with absurd images of her self as the environment around her was equally inactive with no opportunities for social interaction. James claims that the "central part of the self is *felt*" (298) and an individual can experience it as long as it can stimulate the sense of belonging. However, Inbar was denied the aspect of belonging and felt detached from her surroundings. The intense burden of seclusion buried within Inbar forces her to assume that her future in Israel is absurd. Professor Shanyang Zhao[8] claims in his re-reading of James's theory of self that "human individuals are both conscious of their environment and self-conscious of their existence" (201). He also states that the "stream of consciousness" within individuals constitutes the meaning of "I" which facilitates the process of awareness and self-awareness (201). Inbar experiences inconsistency between the conscious of her existence and the environment. This leads to the *sabra* predicament, forcing her to search for alternate life options. She convinces herself that her dream of writing a travelogue on Jewish wanderism would help her achieve a state of tranquility where she would finally understand the reasons behind her unsettled consciousness. Inbar chooses to wander rather than to stay at a place where she is perceived as an unidentified non-existing entity.

Dori encounters a similar existential crisis latently connected to his unidentified self regarding his life in Israel. His meaningless married life and tiring teaching job constantly remind his subjective and social disconnection. He questions his self, presumably contradictory to the

[8] Zhao is a professor of sociology at Temple University. In his article "Self as an Emic Object: A Re-Reading of William James on Self", Zhao theorizes self as a unity of a person's empirical existence and the perception of that existence. His dynamic and multi-vocal discussions on the concept of self provide diverse explanations to James's definition of self.

sabra image of strength and virility. Unlike his father who was a war veteran, Dori considers himself to be naïve and unworthy of his family's gallant history. He seeks solace from the hustles of expectations and responsibilities which implicitly hinder the process of self-discovery. "Business or pleasure? the driver continues his interrogation. Neither, Dori admits." (Nevo 20) His journey of escape begins with this truthful revelation that he is in search of himself. Sociologists Jose Itzigsohn and Karida Brown emphasize the centrality of "accumulated experiences" and "social interaction" in the interpretation of self as enumerated by William James (233). They consent with the notions of shared experiences and interaction being focal points of the identification of self in every individual. American sociologist Charles Cooley's earlier studies on human nature also share similar observations that acknowledge the significance of social factors in the recognition of the self. He states that an individual needs "fellowship" and "appreciation" from his/her social group to provide "social corroboration and support" to his/her self (261). Both Dori and Inbar are seemingly deprived of social factors that constitute their meaningful selves. The pressures of personal, communal and political aspects of Israeli society seemingly disrupt the social lives, specifically of young Israelis who are forced to seek escape in journeys.[9] Israeli Professor Chaim Noy states that "what lies at the core of the backpackers' stories, though often covert, is these youths' selves and identities, rather than the exciting activities and accomplishments" (79). Noy's observations consent to contextualize the young Israeli predicament captured by Nevo within the broader notion of self being determined by social factors. American sociologist Joel Charon[10] observes that when the uniqueness of self is celebrated, human mind becomes vigorous and compassionate, transforming itself into the process of action which is being taken towards an impulsive, spontaneous and socially created source of freedom (90). What Nevo attempts to capture is the consequences of limitations to self among young Israelis who seek temporary yet intense escape from reality. He subtly places the wandering syndrome on a larger social canvas to enumerate the irrefutable connection between human behavior and the environment. In this process, Nevo identifies the concept of self as a deterministic force capable of shaping the environment and constructing a space appropriate for its further actions. Both Dori and Inbar are conditioned by the forces of their past, social structures, culture and social institutions. Their ability to determine self is regulated by these forces and lacks their instinctive ability to determine their own action without being controlled. Literary evolutionist Joseph Carroll deliberates on the prominence of the environment in

[9] Chaim Noy's observations on young Israeli backpackers recorded in his article "This Trip Really Changed Me: Backpackers' Narratives of Self-Change," identifies the journeys of escape, relaxing and peaceful unlike the relentless trauma of Israeli society.

[10] Most of Charon's works in the field of sociology focus on the interdependent nature of human-environment interaction. He examines the components of individual identity and behaviors from the vantage view of sociology.

modifying human behavior in his seminal text *Reading Human Nature: Literary Darwinism in Theory and Practice*.

> Humans have evolved in an adaptive relation to their environment. They argue that for humans, as for all other species, evolution has shaped the anatomical, physiological, and neurological characteristics of the species, and they think that human behavior, feeling, and thought are fundamentally constrained and informed by those characteristics. (6)

Environmental conditions play a pivotal role in shaping individual identity through which the self is revealed. The credibility of instinctive human action is perceptibly questioned as the self which is an inevitable result of human action, is shaped through collective experiences. Unlike several philosophical observations on self as a subjective phenomenon,[11] the objectivity of self befits current implications. James divides the concept of self into "I" and "Me". "I" identifies self as knower and "Me" identifies self as the known collective experiences. Here, "Me", the empirical self, is discussed for the acute interpretation of social experiences, behavioral patterns, emotion and cognition as interconnected phenomenon of human minds. His analysis of the empirical self is very broad.

> The empirical self is tempted to call by the name of me. But it is clear that between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine, the line is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves. Our frame, our children, the work of our hands, may be as dear to us as our bodies are, and arouse the same feelings and the same acts of reprisal if attacked. (291)

James classifies the empirical self into three indigenous subdivisions namely the Material Self, the Spiritual Self and the Social Self. The material self is not circumscribed to physical entities like objects, people or places that carry an individual's identity, rather it comprises one's psychological possession of them. The reality of the material self is defined by its fluidity and encompassment rather than restricting it with the mere ownership of tangible objects. James's definition of the material self is similar to what Rosenberg[12] calls the extracorporeal self or the extended self. James argues, "not only the people but the places and things I know enlarge my self in a sort of metaphoric way" (308). He states that the emotional investment of an individual in an entity can decide its reliability as a part of the self. Similarly, disruptions or limits to the material self can result in an unrecognized self as in the case of young Israeli Jews rightly captured by Nevo. Though Dori and Inbar possess access to material entities, they are unable to identify them as their extended selves. This is a disheartening condition experienced among Jews in Israeli society which makes them ineffective in acquiring psychological supremacy over material attributes crucially because of the trauma of the past and relentless socio-political unrest.

[11] The subjective definition attributed to self elucidates it as entity observed about an individual from his/her own perspective. See Flanagan (2009), McIntosh (1995), Jopling (2002) and Zahavi (2008).

Israeli journalist Amos Elon traces how the Jewish traumatic memory has become the "rhythm and ritual of public life" and identifies it as a "latent hysteria in Israeli life" (199). The following excerpt from *Neuland* reflects the same.

> And for what? The girl continued, what am I leaving Mama for? Eretz Yisrael? What do we know about it? What does it have to do with us? Before they used all that propaganda on us in the training camp, we had no desire to go to that country. Who is waiting for us there? The British? The Arabs? (Nevo 162)

Though this is a conversation recollected from Inbar's grandmother's memory, it has strong implications of psychological detachment observed among Israeli Jews even years after the establishment of the State of Israel. This detachment and obfuscation formed out of unattained material self cause the wandering syndrome albeit temporary among the young Israeli Jews. Zerubavel notes that the Zionist image of *sabra* is challenged not only by the Jews who have already left the country but also by those "who obsessively fantasize about life in another place." (128) He explains that the latter "even if they never actually leave – are symbolically a part of the syndrome of the wandering Israeli and, likewise, challenge the basic premise of the Zionist dream" (128). This concern is reflected in the words of Alfonso, Dori's guide, who is occupied to search for lost people. "Twenty per cent of my clients are Israelis . . . Sometimes I have the feeling that you Israelis really want to get lost" (Nevo 30). The political fury, charges of delegitimization, the complexity of heterogeneous ethnic groups and endless combats pose a menace to the Zionist vision of the final Jewish settlement. However Elon adds "even had there not been any Arabs, or if by some wondrous event their enmity were to disappear overnight, the lingering effect of traumatic memory would probably be almost as marked as it is today" (199). Nevo exemplifies Jewish consciousness in its dichotomy where the Jews are expected to re-establish self in Israel but reluctant to identify their existence in a land where chaos is persistent. Dori and Inbar, threatened by the chaos, find themselves deprived of material self and chose to wander.

The spiritual self, on the other hand, is the inner self. James defines it as "man's inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions" (296). He identifies these dispositions as enduring and intimate. An individual's acquired abilities, behavior, emotions, virtues, opinions and traits constitute the spiritual self. It is the state of consciousness related to man's innate characteristics which facilitate his/her connection to the environment. James claims that human beings are self-satisfied "when we think of our ability to argue and discriminate, of our moral sensibility and conscience, of our indomitable will, than when we survey any of our other

[12] American social psychologist Morris Rosenberg (1982, 2015) has made significant contributions to the concepts of self and self-esteem. Rosenberg's extracorporeal self can be construed as the sub-structure of material self differentiated from the bodily self.

possessions" (296). Similar to material possessions, the spiritual attributes are also owned by the self as logical assets[13]. The connection between limits to spiritual self and the Israeli wandering syndrome is intriguing. The *sabra* is presumably conceived of specific traits that determine their pivotal role in executing the dream of Zionist forefathers. Their psychic dispositions are imbibed of ideological properties and disparities in the same obfuscate their access to spiritual selves. This is unraveled through the character of Inbar.

> No, I am sorry, she says. You tried so hard the whole time. And I . . . I just . . . I haven't been feeling great lately. And I came here to find out why. I mean, also to be with you . . . But also to try and understand myself . . . and I haven't really managed to do that. I mean, I have, but I am afraid to admit it. And all this . . . this confusion . . . spilled over on you in the end. (Nevo 233)

Inbar's confession to her mother exemplifies the impact of spiritual illness, causing emotional insanity in her life. The mother and daughter sense discomfort in their relationship due to ideological and emotional disparities. Inbar as a *sabra* is supposed to be strong, determined and rooted in Israel. But from the beginning, she appears to be an undetermined soul seeking to solve the mystery of the Wandering Jew, a metaphorical reference to herself. She was deprived of comfort and compassion from her mother who had immigrated to Germany from Israel to build a new life. Inbar is disgusted and loathes her mother for living in a country which educes their unhealed wounds of the Holocaust. She confronts her mother when she chooses a German man as her partner. "And what did he do during the Holocaust? And his father? Which camp did he serve in? . . . But they were all here the Nazis ruled, weren't they?" (Nevo 173) Inbar is persistent whenever her mother attempts to justify her decision. This behavior is indeed a *sabra* trait; however, Inbar is contradictorily unsure of her life in Israel too. As her insecurities grow stronger, Inbar develops an aura of passiveness to detach herself from Israel by building a hopeless space of irrationality. She attempts to justify her conscious denial of spiritual self by claiming that there is no escape for Jews from the scantiness of spiritual tranquility. Dori, on the other hand, is in constant conflict with his spiritual self. Psychologists De Dreu and van Knippenberg observe that people often find themselves to be personally attacked when they are in any disagreement. They become uncompromising and confrontational when they fail to acknowledge the multiple perspectives of people. For instance, Dori is in disagreement with his *sabra* image. He could not follow the path of his brave father who fought for the country. He is uncertain about his affection for his wife Roni who is impassive. He doubts his ability as a good father to his only son. Dori's internal conflicts with his psychic dispositions ignite his urge to take a temporary break from reality in pursuit of discovering himself. The disturbed spiritual

[13] For elaborate discussions on the connection between Material and Spiritual Self, see Heider (1958), Abelson (1986), Gilovich (1993).

selves of both the characters affect their inconsistent lives in Israel, causing the wandering syndrome.

Social self refers to the ways in which human beings are recognized and regarded by each other in society. James emphasizes man's prime instinct to be noticed and accepted in his/her environment. In that way, peoples' social self constitute the recognition they acquire from their mates, says James and claims that "we are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind" (293). Human beings demonstrate the tendency to be acknowledged for their individuality and they attempt to engage in social activities that would manifest the self they expect to be identified. When an individual is able to express his identity in a social group via mutual recognition and environmental interaction, his/her possibility of developing a strong social self is higher as the self is being acknowledged with all its empirical elements. James positions the trait of social self as an instinctive drive to be recognized by others and reiterates its significance in forming social relations. In *Neuland*, both Dori and Inbar experience obstacles in their process of achieving social selves. They are either detached from their social group or forced into an emotional impasse. Dori's insensitive relation with his wife and Inbar's belligerent attitude towards her mother reflect the consequences of neglect and exclusion. James's concept of social self has paved the way to further developments in modern scholarship related to the prominence of interpersonal associations in communal living.[14] The concept of relational self is modified as social self, elucidating the important aspects of what human beings perceive as "ours" such as paternities, siblings, romantic partners, friends, colleagues, etc. Both the notions of social self and related self accredit that the recognition from what we call as "ours" define what we are. Nevo provides a fictional representation of this phenomenon by portraying the complex lives of individuals devoid of interpersonal relations. For instance, Roni's justification for her insensitive attitude towards Dori is depressing.

> Right at the beginning, during their first months together, she told him that she didn't know how to miss anyone. And that he shouldn't be hurt by it. That's how it is with kibbutz survivors. When you cry for your mother all night in the children's house and no one comes to you . . . I don't know . . . my missing mechanism must have got screwed up, she tried to explain once. (Nevo 117)

Roni grew up in a *kibbutz*[15] in the outskirts of Jerusalem. *Kibbutz* is a collective agrarian communal settlement in Israel that functions under the combination of socialist and Zionist ideologies. The development of the *kibbutz* had played a crucial role in the influx of Jewish immigration to then Palestine. Roni claims that her unfortunate experiences as a *kibbutznik*[16] had

[14] For more information see Anderson & Chen (2002) and Chen et al. (2006).

transformed her into an insensitive individual. The loss of family in her early childhood and life in kibbutz has supposedly caused her impassive nature as she was conditioned to prevent herself from expressing her emotions. She is obstinate on her perspective even when Dori confronts her. "Say whatever you feel like. Just don't be hurt if I don't say it back." (Nevo 117) When Roni was in need of recognition from her fellow beings, she was rejected and left alone to suffer. Thus she had conditioned her mind to reject the society and create a personal space where she would be protected and unaffected from the emotional outrages of the environment. She forced herself to disconnect from people and expected Dori to understand her complex psychological structure. However, Dori is the most affected person from Roni's ineffective social self. He seeks companionship and emotional dependency in his wife but she does not recognize them. What takes him on the journey is the relentless search for recognition which he finds through Inbar. The significance of relational or social self can be explained through various aspects. The unconscious and impulsive mention of others while describing oneself (Dollinger and Dollinger 337), the exchange of thoughts, feelings, traits, attributes and the determination of relational identities (Baldwin 326-329) enumerate the importance of an active social self. The negation of these elements can hinder the establishment of meaningful social relations. Similar to Roni, Inbar also experiences social detachment. She could not seek comfort in her mother. When her mother found a new life that Inbar thought was against their ideological belief, she felt abandoned. Her seemingly impulsive decision to leave Israel was actually an outburst of her suppressed fears regarding her life in Israel: "I don't want Tel Aviv, she explained again. I want to fly out on your next flight, to wherever it's going. Whatever the price." (Nevo 236) The journey for Inbar was an escape from reality. It was a symbolic act of rediscovering herself through other people who would recognize and notice her. When she meets Dori, she finds her lost self as they accept and appreciate one another. Both Dori and Inbar were deprived of their relational selves in Israel only to achieve them in their journey towards freedom, discovery and existence.

The self is an inevitable aspect of individual identity. Charon identifies self as an indispensable possession of human beings.

> [T]o see yourself in time and space; to see yourself as part of the environment; to talk to yourself about yourself; to constantly evaluate yourself as you act; to realize that you yourself are living, you were born had a past, you have a future, and you will die; to recognize that you are the object of others and that others too see themselves as objects make the self the tremendously important quality that makes us human. (71)

[15] See Ranen Omer-Sherman's text *Imagining the Kibbutz* for detailed information.

[16] Kibbutznik refers to a member of a Kibbutz.

Identity is an element aware of time and space. As Heidegger notes, the notion of human existence or *being* in the world is marked by the temporal dimensions of man's material and extracorporeal attributes or selves. An individual's empirical reality evolves over time as he/she progresses in his/her ability for introspection or in other words, for self-reflection. Nevo captures this intriguing process of discovery by contextualizing it from the perspective of Israeli Jews. Though Dori and Inbar chose to wander to postpone reality their journeys which traverse through different spaces in time facilitates them to explore the aspects of self that were denied due to subjective and social factors. The dilemma of Israeli life reflects throughout the text where the social, political and psychological unrest of the State of Israel are identified to be some of the crucial reasons behind the wandering syndrome observed among the young Jewish Israelis. Nevo does not blame the State of Israel, rather he attempts to elucidate why the process of self-discovery is complex for the native Israelis. He observes an acute connection between social experiences and the self. Nevo asks his readers to contemplate this inexorable association as discussed by sociologist G.H. Mead in his text *Mind, Self and Society*. Mead states that the self is constructed "through the process of social conduct . . . it is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experiences" (138-140). However, this image of self cannot be obtained until an individual develops the ability to act towards oneself in every situation or the environment in which he/she enters. The process of adaptation and the ability to take the perspective of the other result in the emergence of self, as its recognition is associated with objectivity.

Nevo captures the consequences of limits to the self and emphasizes its centrality in human lives through the story of Dori and Inbar who represent the bewildered new generation of Israeli Jews struggling amidst the incessant social unrest of the State. However, there is a strong undercurrent of hope in Nevo's narration as his protagonists are oriented towards their identities rooted in Israel. The problematic phase of confusion and temporary detachment from Israel is gradually surmounted by Dori and Inbar when they demonstrate the ability to connect with their subjective, material and social selves in Israel. Though they were offered an alternate reality in the form of a Utopian society, they chose Israel which is a powerful *sabra* trait. The revelation of this trait has a cogent connection with the revelation of the self. The initial tendency to follow the path of a wandering Jew is elevated because of the challenges encountered by Dori and Inbar in understanding and accepting their self. Their material, spiritual and social selves were incapacitated which in turn escalated their urge for leaving Israel and wandering. Dori's journey in search of his father and Inbar's desire to continue her travel rather than returning to Israel manifest disconnection from their self. But the temporary detachment from Israel unravels the invincible connection between their self which is socially and psychologically rooted in Israel.

Dori and Inbar realize that their true self will only be actualized in Israel as their personal and social lives are rooted in the cultural landscape of Israel. Dori's blatant rejection of Menny's "neuland" and Inbar's decision to return to Israel exemplifies the *sabra* spirits rekindled with the revelation of self. Nevo's approach towards the Jewish Wandering Syndrome appears optimistic as his protagonists demonstrate deep-seated national affinity despite the subjective and social challenges through the discovery of their self. The momentousness of self is therefore unraveled in defining the persistence of new generation Israeli Jews who are connected to Israel in entirety.

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BIO

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