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The Songs of the Siren: ¹Engineering National Time on Israeli Radio
By Danny Kaplan

Abstract: This article explores how Israeli radio stations regulate national time in accordance with Jewish–Zionist temporal regimes. Informed by an ethnographic study of popular music programming on national and regional radio stations it is shown how broadcasting schedules operate as a uniform pendulum alternating between everyday life and times of commemoration or emergency. Following examples of music broadcasting during Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers, the First Gulf War and terror attacks during the Second Palestinian Intifadah the author explores a practice of “mood shifting” that is borrowed from the bureaucratic logic of commemoration rituals to times of war and terror attacks. The mood shift activates a commemorative mode that echoes sacred mnemonic devices of Jewish remembrance. Consequently, it is argued that times of emergency in Israeli culture are represented through and subordinated to sacred experience, substituting a political interpretation of terrorism with a mythic framework.

Keywords: radio, time, music, emergency, commemoration, Judaism, Israel, nationalism, terrorism

This article is dedicated to the memory of Galit Saada-Ophir, a dear friend and promising scholar of Israeli civil society and popular music. Galit tragically and incomprehensibly died while giving life to her twin boys in December 2008.

One of my early childhood recollections in Jerusalem during the 1973 Yom Kippur War is how my close playmate from the apartment next door froze in her place when the alarm siren sounded instead of rushing down to the shelter.¹ It turned out that she confused the rising and falling sound of the siren activated during times of emergency with the steady siren sounded on memorial days, when the whole country is brought to a standstill for a moment of silent communion with the dead. In what follows I suggest that underlying my friend's naïve mistake is more than simply a matter of inexperience, but rather a deep-rooted association between modes of national emergency and modes of collective commemoration in Israeli-Zionist culture. I shall do so by analyzing a site of music production, which, on the face of it, is far removed from the sounds of sirens, that of radio broadcasting. Informed by an ethnographic study of national and regional radio stations in Israel (Kaplan 2008b), I examine how the growing use of music programming presents new ways for engineering national identification.² The structure of Israel's radio scene and its music broadcasting policies regulate collective time in a uniform manner, attempting to abruptly alter the public mood in response to national events, in a sense extending the function of the siren. Alternating between ordinary life and times of commemoration or emergency this occasioning of collective time follows Jewish-Zionist temporal regimes perceived as sacred. Consequently, it produces a parallel between times of emergency and sacred time. I shall argue that times of emergency are represented through and subordinated to sacred, mythic experience and suggest possible political implications in terms of the cultural responses to terrorism.

NATIONALISM AND COLLECTIVE TIME

The present analysis is inspired by Benedict Anderson's discussion of time in *Imagined Communities* (1991). Although this work is quoted extensively, Anderson's specific discussion of time and nationalism has received limited attention, most notably in theoretical debates on postcolonialism (e.g., Gupta 2004; Kelly 1998). Anderson argues that the development of mass communication systems since early modernity helped shape a common social imaginary along the lines of national identity. This new identification derives from a novel notion of collective time. Following Walter Benjamin (1968), Anderson (1991:24) distinguishes between two subjective perceptions of time. The first is "simultaneity-along-time" associated with the presecular era; the second is "transverse time," preferably termed "simultaneity-in-time" (Singer 1996:321), and is associated with modern nationalism. Related distinctions can be found in a range of studies that have

examined the cultural construction of time, differentiating between sacred and profane time (Eliade 1959; Leach 1961), or more specifically between the mythic, circular time and the historical, linear time (e.g., Freeman 1998; Yerushalmi 1982; Zerubavel 1981). Yet none of these studies purposely examined the import of collective time on nationalism.

Anderson notes that prior to secularization, collective events drew their meaning from a divine being whose transcendental point of view could combine past, present and future. As a result, members of the community could easily relate to selected events of the ancient past in terms of their own everyday life. The “here and now” was imagined as “simultaneously something which has always been” (Auerbach 1957:64), hence the perception of simultaneity-along-time. In contrast, simultaneity-in-time is associated with two aspects of early modernity. The first is the technological developments in the objective measurement of time. As time could be increasingly understood as arbitrary, “homogenous,” and “empty,” it opened itself to multiple interpretations of the present. The second, complementary process is the changes in media technology and economy (“print capitalism”), particularly the spread of newspapers. Newspapers linked in the readers’ imagination unrelated yet concurrently occurring events, assigning new meaning to an otherwise homogenous–empty time (Anderson 1991:35). As a result, a growing number of people could increasingly imagine themselves living their lives in parallel to fellow readers, sharing a strong sense of common identity and destiny. Through the faculty of simultaneity-in-time the nation could thus be envisioned as a single social body moving uniformly through historical time.

THE RADIO AND THE MANAGEMENT OF TIME

How does Anderson’s notion of the simultaneous reading community relate to other forms of mass media? Since the early 20th century the electronic media, first the radio and later the television, have assumed a dominant role in shaping national solidarity (Katz and Wedell 1977). Yet there has been little in-depth study as to their involvement in reproducing a sense of community through the management of time. To begin with, even as anthropologists have begun to study localized and national aspects of television viewing and production (e.g., Abu-Lughod 2004), relatively few studies have tackled the radio’s involvement in shaping national cultures (Douglas 2004; Molnar 2004; Scannell and Cardiff 1991; Spitulnik 1999). As noted by Jo Tacchi (2000), precisely because radio has become a part of the everyday fabric of life in industrialized societies, the effects of its omnipresence remain for the most part understudied. A similar gap exists in studies of mass media and Israeli national culture. Whereas numerous researchers have examined the reproduction of national

sentiments via television (e.g., Katsch 1981), films (e.g., Hazan 2002) and newspapers (e.g., Meyers 2002), only a few scholars explored the import of Israeli radio on the national culture, focusing predominantly on talk programs (Katriel 2004; Liebes 2006; Penslar 2003). Two studies on the commemoration of the Holocaust have also addressed musical programming (Meyers and Zandberg 2002; Neiger et al. in press).

Most of the local scholarship discusses how the electronic media sustain national identity by reproducing a sense of collective past. It pays less attention to the media's involvement in the production of everyday, collective present, as suggested in Anderson's account of the reading community. Along these lines, Tim Edensor (2006) notes how despite the recent proliferation of specialized channels television still generates collective rhythms of daily schedules, annual events, and special events through which a sense of national belonging is sustained. The experience of listening to the radio likewise provides a strong case for Anderson's notion of simultaneity-in-time (Douglas 2004:23). It is therefore surprising that he himself devoted to it only a passing observation, noting the radio's understudied role in promoting national movements during the mid-20th century (Anderson 1991:54).

Live radio or television broadcasting is a purely temporal event. Unlike newspapers, it is not limited to a single daily edition and does not enable the readers to process the news at their own pace and time. Rather, the electronic broadcast imposes on its audience a uniform pace to collectively engage with the unfolding of events. In many countries primetime television news bulletins form a part of people's daily domestic schedule. Even more far-reaching is the radio's enforcement of collective time. In Israel in particular, radio newsflashes are broadcasted on virtually all stations at hourly intervals and on some public stations at half-hour intervals. The news jingle generates a repeated pulse (most vividly so on the state public network where, following the BBC tradition, news bulletins are preceded by a signal of six "pips"). This pulse generates a singular moment where people bring their individual activities to a momentary standstill and participate in a collective ritual of reflection on current events. Furthermore, the very notion of a "live" broadcast captures this sense of a combination of people and events moving jointly as one living body in a unique, nonrecurring moment in historical time, in contrast, perhaps, to the cyclic quality of mythical time and its endeavor to blend the living with the dead.

SIGNPOSTS IN THE ISRAELI RADIO SCENE

Radio holds a central role in shaping Israel's Jewish national culture. Unlike many Western states

where a national identity crystallized prior to the arrival of public radio, a Jewish national radio program was initiated in Palestine as early as 1936 and subsequently evolved into the state-owned radio network *Kol Yisrael* (the Voice of Israel) with the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 (Liebes 2006; Penslar 2003). The launching of a military radio station, *Galei Tsahal*, soon followed suit, gaining popularity well beyond its designated military audience. To this day both public networks, each divided into various specialized stations, form jointly more than 70 percent of the overall radio audience ratings (Second Authority for Television and Radio 2006).

Israeli radio benefited from near-exclusivity during its formative years. Whereas television established its cultural dominance over the radio in most Western countries by the 1950s and was the prevailing national medium in states of the Third World emerging in the 1960s (Katz and Wedell 1977), Israeli Television broadcasting was deliberately delayed for political reasons up till 1968. As a result, radio has historically played a more dominant part in shaping the national culture and collective memory based on the hegemonic ideals of the Zionist pioneers of *Ashkenazi* (European Jewry) background. To this end broadcasters produced educational programs, socialized new immigrants to Zionist values, disseminated vernacular Hebrew, and tried to advance a European-oriented high culture in music and literature (Liebes 2006; Penslar 2003).

Much of the preceding account focused on talk-related broadcasting. Yet as television and Internet-based communication have gradually come to dominate the verbal domain of mass media, radio stations across the world increasingly concentrate on the music domain (Crisell 2004:vii). A similar process has taken place in Israel. In 1971, an offshore “pirate” station *The Voice of Peace*, started to air Western pop music throughout the day. The military network, *Galei Tsahal*, has also developed a new format mixing popular music with talk material that increased its appeal among the youth. Faced with the mounting popularity of both stations, the *Kol Yisrael* network established in 1976 a new station, *Reshet Gimel* (“third station”), devoted solely to pop music and later on exclusively to Israeli pop music.

Two other nearly concurrent organizational changes contributed to what can be best described as the radio’s “music revolution.” The first was the founding in 1993 of *Galgatz*, a second station by the military network, specializing in nonstop pop music combined with traffic updates, the first local drivers’ radio. One of the station’s mottos—“music that is moving” (the term used is *naim*, which means both pleasant and to move)—captures the key to the station’s immediate success and ongoing peak ratings (19 percent of overall audience rating according to Second Authority for Television and Radio 2006). It was the first Israeli station to introduce a successful format of easy listening known in

the U.S. radio market as “adult contemporary” (AC; Greve 1996). This format, a perfect companion for an “air-conditioned” driving experience, is based on a preprogrammed, restricted playlist of mainstream pop songs aiming at the 25–45 age range. Galgalatz adopted a similar format with a stronger emphasis on contemporary hits that could also cater for the younger soldier audience and provides a well-calculated balance between English and Hebrew songs.

Applying the AC playlist to the Hebrew pop scene entailed also the exclusion of some local genres, particularly *mizrachi* (oriental) music.³ In terms of the AC logic, *mizrachi* music of the more hardcore variety is often perceived to have “rough edges” that could potentially “annoy people.” Such was an argument made by one programmer in an internet forum in support of listeners who complained about the “deterioration” of Galgalatz after the station unexpectedly aired a song by Kobbi Peretz, a popular hardcore *mizrachi* singer (Nana Radio Forum 2003).

A second, broader organizational change occurred in 1995, with the erection of fourteen new “regional radio” stations throughout the country, following the government’s decision to authorize a limited number of privately owned stations based on a geographical allocation of radio frequencies. As part of a privatization revolution in the electronic media and accompanied by a rhetoric that promised greater diversity and more attention to neglected audiences, the public legislators sanctioned the new stations to explore new niches that would provide “adequate representation of distinctive topics that would cater for the local residents and their special needs” (Second Authority for Television and Radio 1990).

In practice however, only three regional stations have chosen to focus on distinct differentiated communities. One of them, Radio A-Shams, targets the Arab-speaking audience throughout the country, another station targets the Jewish religious public, and a third aims for the sizable Russian immigrant population. As most of the Arab citizens as well as the Jews of the ultraorthodox community are highly segregated from the Jewish–Zionist majority, programming practices in these so-called “sectoral” stations differ dramatically from most regional and public stations. In contrast, all other regional stations have followed the public networks in presupposing and targeting a relatively homogenous Jewish audience. The listeners are typically envisioned to hold secular or semitraditional Jewish values, to practice a consumerist lifestyle, and to be committed to Zionist ideals. The continual ignorance of marginalized subgroups in the official Israeli radio scene has resulted in a proliferation of pirate radio stations, particularly among the Arab and Jewish ultraorthodox communities (Limor and Naveh 2008).

In terms of music programming most regional stations try to imitate and compete with the success

of Galgalatz in standardizing its music through AC playlist programming, while still maintaining some sense of distinctiveness to accomplish a strategic market positioning. The resulting radio scene is characterized by competitive and institutional isomorphism (Dimaggio and Powell 1983), reminiscent of the standardization processes in the U.S. radio market (Ahlkvist and Fisher 2000; Greve 1996). However, it hasn't quite developed into a fragmented "format radio" scene, where many stations target a differentiated "niche" audience by airing repeatedly a distinct and limited playlist throughout the day (Lochte 2004). Rather, in their attempt to compete with the national networks over the general audiences the local Israeli stations have adopted a combination of talk and music programming colored by mainstream pop music playlists. Eventually, much of the variation in the stations' musical style boils down to the choice of balance between English and Hebrew songs and to the extent that programmers include mizrachi music. In line with the geographical segregation of some mizrachi audiences, stations in the periphery, especially in the south of the country, tend to play more mizrachi music than stations in central Israel.

On the face of it, the music revolution on Israeli radio would imply that much of the radio's earlier role in disseminating national values would diminish. For how can pop rock music, with its universalistic, individualistic, and at times rebellious ethos, become a vehicle for national indoctrination? In addition, the emergence of a privately owned, commercial radio scene would suggest that values of globalization and consumption would contradict and possibly replace national considerations (Schudson 1994). Nonetheless, I will show how in their systematic attempt to engineer collective time music programmers in most stations present an alternative, more subtle way than news and talk programs to sustain national identification.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL FIELD OF MUSIC PROGRAMMING: FROM MEDIATION TO INTERPRETATION

"Music is a tremendous thing in my view. It can take you to distant places and work on a very broad spectrum of emotions." This is how a senior music programmer on the national station 88FM reflected on the potential effect of music on her listeners.⁴ Indeed, unlike the explicit nature of messages communicated in news and talk programs, the meaning of a message conveyed through music and song is vague and ambivalent. The combination of a song's lyrics, its musical parameters, and the unpredictable, individual state of mind of the listeners at the time of broadcasting may stimulate variable emotional responses. Following the "ethnographic turn" in audience research (Spitulnik 1993:298) scholars have begun to address the complexities involved in "deciphering" people's

responses to radio broadcasts in localized context (Spitulnik 1999:64). Along these lines, Jo Tacchi (1998) underscores the subtle ways that radio sound is listened to in the home and experienced as a source of intimate sociability. Specifically with regard to music, Tia DeNora (2000:55) notes its role as a mood enhancement, such as when listeners actively seek music to “get in the mood” before attending a social event. Market research has also explored the ways that music can be used to engineer the emotional environment in commercial setting as part of a marketing strategy (Bruner 1990). Yet virtually no study has systematically explored how musical mood enhancement is conceptualized and implemented by public agents to engineer national sentiments.

The present discussion tackles this question by exploring the taken-for-granted worldview shared by music programmers in Israel’s radio scene as they presuppose a relatively unified audience response. Despite its open-ended quality, the meaning of musical communication is negotiated within the structural constraints of an organizational field. In recent decades music is increasingly studied through the “production of culture” perspective (Peterson and Anand 2004), extending the study of art and media objects beyond the “text” itself to its social and political environment (Spitulnik 1993:295). As a field of symbolic production, music is shaped by factors such as technological innovations, state regulation, the music industry and its organizational structure, networks between mediators in the field, and market considerations (Dowd 2004). In particular, the emergence of shared conventions and networks between music industry producers and radio programmers can smooth the flow of production and at the same time limit diversity in the field. As radio programmers act as “gatekeepers” in the music market, record companies benefit from the development of standardized musical preferences among programmers.

In Israel, such standardization is facilitated by the underlying common habitus shared by the dominant actors in the music scene, which revolves around the pop rock aesthetic at the expense of other genres, such as mizrachi music (Regev 1997). This common habitus is cultivated in the programmers’ professional training, their social networks as indeed in their general socialization to Israeli–Zionist values. Most senior music programmers have received their initial training either in the state network of Kol Yisrael or the military network Galei Tsahal. The latter is the prime breeding ground for media professionals in the country and a major agent of socialization to rock culture (Mautner 2001). Another intersection in the career of some music programmers is Radius 100FM, a young but relatively established commercial station specializing in Western pop music. However, even broadcasters with no professional background in one of the dominant stations tend to share the same habitus and follow the same conventions simply by their implicit training as longtime listeners

and experienced participants in Zionist culture. The result is a uniformity of music preferences and cultural values that is particularly significant in times of commemoration and emergency.

For example, when Yaniv started his first steps in music broadcasting in the local Radio Haifa, his own personal background guided him in how to act in times of emergency:

For me Memorial Day [for fallen soldiers] is sacred, all of my brothers lost their best friends ... so when I broadcast [on that day], I want the listener to ... get in the mood. I recall this incidence when on my shift in the six-a-clock morning news they reported that two Israeli soldiers died [in a terror attack]. The [senior] programmer had prepared in advance the playlist that was to start with this [cheerful pop] song "I'm crazy about her" but I simply couldn't play it after such news so I first put a sad song and then returned to the list ... The programmer scolded me for not sticking to the list ... but as far as I'm concerned, it's a soldier that was killed, one of us, and so you need a style of song that relates to a moment of sadness before you can go on ... "

Yaniv's spontaneous act of "mood shifting" in an incident of terror attack was in full accordance with customary programming practices, as will be described below. What Yaniv didn't know as a new broadcaster and was consequently reprimanded was that his station changed the customary policy and raised the "threshold" for emergency programming beyond the level of a few casualties. It is also interesting to note how Yaniv conflated his personal attitudes toward times of commemoration with music practices in times of emergency, as he inadvertently implemented emotions associated with Memorial Day with an example of mood shifting following a terror incident. As I will show, this linkage between the representation of commemoration and the representation of emergency is persistent in Israeli music programming.

Overall, Yaniv's story demonstrates how a homogenous field of radio programmers inevitably cultivates a homogenous field of listeners that are trained to follow the same norms and to experience the appropriate moods.⁵ What emerges from such examples and is often missing in studies stemming from the production of culture perspective is the significance of the meaning systems involved in the musical broadcast (Eyerman and Ring 1998). Radio programmers have an important role not simply as gatekeepers and mediators, but also as interpreters, as engineers of collective meanings. Although the affective quality of music is more evasive than explicit verbal communication, Israeli programmers overtly perceive it to be no less effective in arousing national sentiments. By deciding not just which song to play but also how to time it with concurrent external events, they inevitably form new collective associations to popular music.

In their interviews programmers laid out a variety of considerations for selecting and editing songs. Some factors were aesthetic, such as choosing the appropriate genre, beat, and groove for the specified timeslot or finding the right “cross,” that is, a common theme, whether musical or verbal, which would form a smooth link between songs. However, another major set of considerations dealt with matching the song’s content with external occurrences. The single most common example described were occasions of rainy days, a relatively infrequent occurrence in local Israeli weather that can be met with innumerable songs rich with rain imagery. Another type of matching was to search for a song theme that relates to the content of a talk item to be discussed during a talk and music show. Finally, and most importantly for the sake of the present discussion was the programmers’ concern with addressing current events of national magnitude.

“ON THE ROOFTOPS OF TEL AVIV”

Consider the following example in the management of emergency. During the First Gulf War in 1991 most Israeli citizens were confined to their homes every night in anticipation of Iraqi missile attacks that were targeting predominately the area of Tel Aviv. With the sounding of the alarm siren people were instructed to enter a designated “sealed room” and wear gas masks, in fear for a chemical warhead attack. The radio served two main functions during the war. The first was strictly instrumental: both public networks unified their news broadcast services and in addition assigned a “quiet channel” that aired only the alarm sirens and the ensuing announcements by military authorities, enabling people to sleep undisturbed at other times. But in their other ongoing programming the radio stations served a more expressive function, aiming to provide companionship and comfort during the many nights of tension. In this context, music programmers were confronted with the question of how to address the prolonged emergency situation without overburdening and dispiriting the audience. One of the songs repeatedly aired during that period was a rock song titled “On the Rooftops of Tel Aviv,” (Daniel 1990), which ran:

Look for me tonight in closed spaces
Look for me at home and at strangers’ places.
Indeed now is the end of autumn
The timing is right and you’re not late
If you don’t find me now
You won’t get me later.
On the rooftops of Tel Aviv, something is happening tonight

Not from the heat, not from the cold, I've been hiding here
On the rooftops of Tel Aviv, someone is watching tonight
Shadows moving on white curtains.

These lyrics have no direct bearing on the Gulf War. The song came out a few months earlier and seems to address a Tel Avivian atmosphere of sexual lust combined perhaps with a mood of alienation. But the imagery of closed spaces and Tel Aviv rooftops, and the emotions of loneliness and anticipation that the song conveys, coincided perfectly with the general mood of a population hiding in sealed rooms, at times standing on rooftops in search of missile strikes. Similar to the mundane logic of matching a rain song to stormy weather, the programmers linked the song's imagery with this singular kind of "atmospheric turbulence." Consequently, despite of the song's energetic rock mood and erotic undertones that were far removed from the sort of solemn songs traditionally associated with times of emergency, "On the rooftops of Tel Aviv" became one of the local "hymns" of the first Gulf War, its renewed interpretation forever engraved in Israeli collective memory.

COMMEMORATION AND MOOD SHIFTING

The relationship between popular music, radio broadcasting, and Israeli collective experiences draws on the formative role of what can be best described as the "commemorative mode" in radio programming. On memorial days almost all radio stations play a restricted repertoire of songs commonly referred to as "memorial day songs." The genre typically associated with this category is *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* (Songs of the Land of Israel, also called "homeland songs.") This genre crystallized during the early twentieth century as the national musical genre of the Zionist pioneers in Palestine. Its Modern Hebrew lyrics focused on settlement and agriculture activity as well as romantic accounts of the national homeland and its landscape. The melodies were based on European folk and classical structures, such as Russian folksongs shared by the first waves of Ashkenazi settlers (Regev and Seroussi 2004). Early on, with the escalation in the Israeli–Arab conflict the corpus of homeland songs expanded to incorporate themes of war and sacrifice. These songs shared the same imagery as the rest of the genre and transmitted the same national values. It is only later that they became a distinct category that has come to be known as "memorial songs" (Hirschfeld 2001).

Since the 1970s, following the gradual spreading of new genres, predominantly pop rock and subsequently mizrachi music, homeland songs have lost their hegemony as the popular genre. The single space and time where they could retain their dominance was during memorial days. The shift to this commemorative mode is most prominent and comprehensive on Memorial Day for Fallen

Soldiers and on Holocaust Memorial Day. On some stations it is also marked during Memorial Day for Yitzhak Rabin and on *Tish'a Beav*, a religious fast commemorating the destruction of the first and second temples. On these days of national reckoning radio stations return to the genre of *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* and become a kind of radio-borne museum dedicated to the old homeland songs (Eliram 2006; Hirschfeld 2001). However, unlike the thematic variety of the genre as a whole the programmers select a distinct and relatively uniform set of songs from the musical canon of the designated memorial day. Thus, on Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers the songs often originate from the heritage of Israel's wars, and center on themes of fallen soldiers, sacrifice, and friendship.⁶ All in all, the radio has played a substantial role in shaping the category of memorial day songs and in institutionalizing the commemorative mode of radio programming.

The formation of the commemorative mode reflects the systematic institutionalization of deep-rooted cultural codes in the management of national time. Don Handelman (2004) discusses the "bureaucratic logic" that is powerfully ritualized in state-related public events, imposing a lineal classification system onto preexisting cultural conceptions. Among other things, this bureaucratic logic invokes and reorders Jewish conceptions of time within Zionist commemoration rituals. A central organizing principle in Jewish time is a unidirectional movement from low to high, from the ordinary and the morally inferior to the extraordinary and morally superior. For instance, the Jewish 24-hour day commences at dusk and proceeds to the following day, representing a night-day movement from darkness into light (Hirsch 1985:42). Similarly, the pulsation of the Jewish week moves through six ordinary days culminating with the sacred Sabbath (Saturday) (Zerubavel 1985). A corresponding pattern can be found in some of the Jewish holidays, such as Purim and Passover, which are preceded by a fast day commemorating historical episodes of trepidation or trial. Common to all these temporal sequences is a cultural code of climactic pulsation, projecting a metanarrative movement from suffering and loss to triumph and redemption (Handelman and Katz 2004:138).

This pulsation and the narrative it encodes within religious Judaism are carried over to visions of progression in secular Zionism and implemented in state rituals. In addition to adopting the Hebrew calendar, the religious holidays, the Sabbath and the night-day sequence for official holidays, the modern Israeli state instituted three new national days of remembrance: Holocaust Memorial Day, followed a week later by Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and the immediately following celebration of Independence Day. The sequencing of the three days in close proximity to each other replicates and magnifies the cultural code of climactic pulsation, encoding a metanarrative commonly referred to as "from destruction to resurrection": a movement from the catastrophe of the Holocaust (and the exile in

general), through the sacrifices of life made in the struggles for rebuilding and liberating the nation, and peaking with the establishment of the state of Israel.

Nowhere is this climactic beat made more evident than in the public ceremony that closes Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and opens the eve of Independence Day, held on Mount Herzl, Israel's central memorial site in Jerusalem. Don Handelman and Elihu Katz (2004:129) have observed how, some seven minutes into the event the transition to Independence Day begins: as the plaza is illuminated and the state flag run to masthead a brief selection of readings and songs performed by a choir mark the transition. The spirited, tuneful songs act as "mood shifters" between the two days. Producing a relatively abrupt switch from mourning to celebration, the music embodies the climactic pulsation.

Only a limited number of people participate in the ceremony on Mount Herzl. A great many more can choose to watch it live on the three main TV stations, the two main public radio stations and three of the regional-commercial stations. But what is particularly interesting is that except for Radio A-Shams, the Arab regional station that ignores Zionist memorial days all together, all other stations transmit the exact timing of this mood shift simultaneously, and reflect the commemorative mode throughout the foregoing day as a whole. This has to do with the inclusive character of memorial days, most pronouncedly the Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers. The day opens at 8 pm (given the night-day sequencing), with a nationwide siren of remembrance, followed by a central state ceremony at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and some municipal events across the country. Another siren is sounded the next morning at 11 am, followed by local ceremonies in all military cemeteries, schools, and public institutions. Although state regulations prescribe rather vaguely that broadcasting schedules "shall express the unique character of the day" (*Knesset* 1963), in practice music programming on Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers presents a uniform picture. A gradual mood shift begins around an hour prior to the opening siren, when all stations begin airing calmer songs, still within each station's particular musical programming. As the siren itself is aired on most radio stations, they are practically compelled to address its significance. Immediately following the siren almost all stations turn to play memorial day songs and keep up the special programming throughout the next day, accompanying the ceremonial activities across the country. The memorial programming comes to a sudden end with the second mood shift at 8 pm indicating the closing ceremony on Mount Herzl and the beginning of Independence Day. At the same time that the choir on Mount Herzl performs a selection of songs marking the shift between the two days, all radio stations perform an abrupt switch from memorial songs to an upbeat rhythmic programming that prompts the celebrations of Independence Day. At this point the music style becomes somewhat more variable according to the character of each station.

Against the relative diversity of music programming before and after Memorial Day the uniformity of the commemorative mode across stations is striking. It is in keeping with the general shaping of the memorial rituals as monolithic, representing the Nation and the State as a moral order of unity and singularity, in contrast to the chaos and destruction associated with the prestate era (Handelman and Katz 2004:124). In this sense, the radio broadcast disseminates and magnifies the quality of “selfless unisonance,” as experienced, for instance, by the audience singing the anthem during national ceremonies (Anderson 1991:145), and in the Israeli case is especially apparent in the piercing, awe-inspiring unisonance of the sirens. The majority who choose not to participate in the ceremonies and carry on with their daily life nevertheless encounter the uniform memorial music wherever they go and are thus exposed to the same commemorative mode and mood nonetheless.

As noted earlier, the mood shifting encoded in the commemorative mode during Zionist memorial days reiterates temporal rhythms in traditional Judaism, such as the climactic movement from ordinary days to the Sabbath and religious holidays. This movement is also represented through the use of sirens. Many localities in Israel with a large religious population utilize the state siren system to announce the exact beginning of the Sabbath, employing a single-pitched, steady sound similar to the siren on memorial days, only softer. Here too, radio programming extends the logic of the siren and disseminate it to the greater public, although the effect is much less pronounced than in memorial days, as broadcasting schedules on weekend and holidays vary greatly. Nevertheless, some of the more mainstream stations convey a general theme of pomp and festiveness, which is best represented yet again by the use of *Shirei Eretz Yisrael*. For instance, the commercial station 103FM specializing in talk programs switches on Sabbath and holidays to a mode of continuous music programming in homeland-style Hebrew songs. Radius 100FM, a mainstream commercial station airing predominantly foreign pop music catering to a secular audience has one single slot of exclusively Hebrew music, titled “Hebrew before the Sabbath.” It is aired on Friday evening when many families gather around the Sabbath dinner, adeptly targeting the single ritual of the traditional Sabbath that most secular Israelis relate to. The Sabbath transition to homeland songs or to Hebrew music in general forms a linkage between the sacred Sabbath, on the one hand, and the national revival of the Hebrew language and Hebrew music, on the other hand, thus marking the national as sacred and the global, in this case in the form of foreign pop music, as profane. At stake is the same logic of mood shifting as in memorial days. In both cases the radio applies the bureaucratic logic of the commemorative mode to encode a climactic pulsation from low to high, from the ordinary and the morally inferior to the extraordinary and morally superior. It operates as a pendulum cutting through national time, dividing

it between the profane and the sacred.

MOOD SHIFTING IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY

Beyond its role in commemoration Israeli radio has also held a formative role in managing emergency situations, reporting terrorist attacks, announcing the outbreak of war, and even playing an official role in prompting a state of emergency by disseminating the call-up codes for recruiting military reserves. In these moments of crisis the radio's easy accessibility to events on the ground proved valuable for live reportage as well as for hosting national commentators, providing the public with a sense of coherence and control (Liebes 2006). Advances in the mobility of television coverage and the increase in televised "disaster marathons" (Blondheim and Liebes 2003) seemingly diminished the radio's significance in times of emergency. However, as the radio still holds a leading role in engineering collective time by way of its music programming it offers intriguing ramification for the management of emergency.

Let me begin by way of another account of a confusion of sirens reminiscent of my opening childhood recollection, this time from the Second Lebanon War in 2006. As families from bombarded areas in northern Israel sought refuge in other cities, the newspapers recounted the story of a family hosted for the weekend by Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski. When the siren sounded on Friday evening to herald the onset of the Sabbath, the visiting children instinctively started looking for a bomb shelter, confusing the sound with the alarm siren warning of incoming rockets. Struck by their distress, the mayor decided to temporarily replace the sound of the Sabbath siren in the city with a tune of traditional Jewish songs, proposing specifically the song *Shalom A'le'khem* ("peace be unto you"; *Israel Today* 2006).

In signifying the Sabbath by traditional Hebrew music the mayor enacted the exact same logic of mood shifting underlying weekend music programming on many radio stations. Moreover, the ambiguous use of the siren alludes to a broader phenomenon in Israeli culture: the intriguing correspondences between the representation of emergency and the representation of memorial days as well as holidays. Consider the following conversation with Eran, a music programmer from *Kol Yisrael*:

Question: What happens on holidays?

Response: The general atmosphere is of songs that are more festive, which means using singers I normally don't use during the week, such as Chava Alberstein, because her songs are associated with holidays and official events. It's all very flexible because she has many songs

that are totally not festive. This country is really twisted, because when people hear a song by Chava Alberstein they think something has happened. We've had these really beautiful songs that were simply appropriated for tragic circumstances, songs that used to be really beautiful and turned into songs of mourning, of traumatic situations in the country. You play them and you immediately make the listener feel that something has happened and he doesn't know what. ... Everyone says the most beautiful songs are during Memorial Day [for Fallen Soldiers] and the Holocaust [Memorial Day]. People said it was fun to listen to the radio during wartime, because that's when they air the best songs.⁷

This vignette illustrates two interrelated processes. First, it shows how tragic circumstances have paradoxically become a singular haven for fans of *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* and, vice versa, such songs have become an instant alert "that something has happened" and can no longer be aired at other times, similar to the story of the ambiguous Sabbath siren. Moreover, it is interesting to note the taken for granted manner in which the programmer inadvertently shifted the question from holidays to that of memorial days and wartime, lumping the latter two categories together as "songs of mourning, of traumatic situations in the country." Indeed in terms of broadcasting practices both commemoration and emergency-related circumstances fall under the logic of the commemorative mode based on memorial songs, which in turn are related to traditional holidays. This nexus can be placed in historical context. Oz Almog (2000) notes how in the early 20th century the singing of homeland songs in close-knit groups filled a similar function as prayers chanted in the synagogue, reflecting the construction of early secular practices along traditional Jewish symbolism and presenting an example of Israel's evolving civil religion (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983). Later, with the establishment of the state of Israel this "new Jewish liturgy" served as "what writer Amos Oz called the 'tom-toms,' urging the tribe to battle" (Almog 2000:21). In other words, from its inception the state borrowed the markers of emergency from the vocabulary of tradition and the sacred. For the tom-tom battle drums to be heard across the country the radio services were summoned to the task. In times of warfare and terrorist attacks the radio networks borrowed the bureaucratic logic of memorial days and would shift to a commemorative mode airing the same traditional homeland songs.

The linkage between songs of commemoration and crisis situations resulted in turn with another artistic transformation in the musical genre chosen for the memorial category. As exemplified in the song "On the rooftops of Tel Aviv," already during the Gulf war in 1991 the major music stations aired rock songs rather than exclusively homeland style songs (Regev 1997:123). Because that particular war presented a prolonged period of crisis but with few local casualties and no active Israeli

military involvement programmers may have felt they could replace the traditional genre for the memorial category with a more contemporary, seemingly casual sound, as long as the lyrics somehow related to the collective experience of tension. This trend grew more salient with the advent of mass terrorist attacks, especially those led by Hamas suicide bombers, first in 1994 following the Oslo Peace Accords and then from 2000 onward following the outbreak of the Second *Intifadah* (Palestinian Uprising). All Israeli radio networks, including the new commercial stations, continued to respond to these fatal terrorist attacks with an immediate shift of music programming to the commemorative mode. Guy, the chief musical programmer at the local Haifa radio reported:

In the event of a terrorist attack we immediately report it and then [put] three to five melancholic songs. Then we evaluate what has happened. In the past we would devote the whole day, evening and night, like when there was an attack on bus no. 37, with 12 people dead, all night long there were quiet songs ... we have a ready-made file on the computer, a file for terrorist attacks, to use for the first hours or during the night.

Indeed, many stations prepare a special preprogrammed playlist of songs termed “emergency kit” or “terrorist attack file” to be automatically aired in such instances. This practice is a good example of how the Intifadah intensified Israel’s ongoing social and cultural institutionalization as an “interrupted system” (Kimmerling 1985), a system that is accustomed to shifting back and forth from routine times to wartimes. Yet the point is that as terrorist attacks became so frequent, many programmers felt that the public had become saturated by the stark fluctuations between musical genres and that they should not foster such a strict atmosphere of crisis. Instead they adopted a more diffuse practice referred to as “moderating the music,” where they simply softened the ongoing pop rock programming or incorporated “light” versions of mizrachi music with a flavor of *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* (Saada-Ophir 2006:224), rather than switch entirely to the old genre. The emergency repertoire has changed to a more current sound, incorporating quiet, downbeat songs but with little thematic relevance to themes of tension or mourning.

Unlike memorial days, which provide a clear set of guidelines for mood shifting, terror attacks are by their nature chaotic, fluid, and uncertain. As such they raise constant dilemmas concerning the exact circumstances that deserve a change of mood. The practice of “moderation” enables broadcasters a more subtle negotiation of the commemorative mode. Eran from *Kol Yisrael* describes how “neutral” songs, quiet but not too sad, can assist in avoiding an overreaction: “I always keep a neutral song on stand by in my ‘[gun] barrel.’ If suddenly there’s a report on a terror attack I immediately have to find a song. But it shouldn’t be too sad because there might not be any fatal

injuries and we wouldn't want to cause an alarm." Eran employs the common Hebrew idiom "in the [gun] barrel," which means keeping something ready for use. Yet in the present context, it reveals not only a general state of mind of emergency but specifically an implicit association between songs and gun bullets. Really sad songs can be compared to real deadly bullets in that they should only be aired in case of fatal injuries. By using "neutral" songs however, perhaps the equivalent of a blank cartridge, the public can be kept on alert without becoming too alarmed. The minimal change of tempo from upbeat to downbeat and back in line with the latest news updates has become an efficient solution for the logic of the interrupted system in times of frequent fluctuations: moderation replaced interruption.

Because the coverage of terror attacks lacks a predetermined script reporters are paradoxically granted more initiative and control in managing the events (Blondheim and Liebes 2003). Radio music programmers likewise enjoy a substantial leeway in determining their broadcasting policy following a terror event. The decision when to enter and terminate the commemorative mode is usually taken by the individual broadcaster on duty in consultation with a senior programmer or station manager. At stake is the evasive and perplexing morbid task of assessing the number of casualties and deciding what would be the proper "threshold" for a mood shift and for how long. As noted by Guy from Haifa radio:

If for instance there are three people dead, and, it's not easy to say it, just ten injured, so you know that after an hour or two you can return, maybe not to party music but to songs that aren't too sad. ... The program manager and I myself [enter the emergency mode], according to our gut feeling. We provide the mood and we can change it. I can make a person cry in a second.

Recognizing that they can "make the people cry in a second," programmers not only acknowledge their power in engineering public mood but also feel committed to act responsibly in a way that would fit with the national interest. A music director in the popular military station Galgalatz spells out his duty as a guardian of public morale: "The radio signifies the national mood. ... X hours have passed since the terror attack, and we want to return the color to the cheeks, lift the spirit and go back to normal life despite the pain ... the motivation to make a change is something we need to decide. We need to reach a decision and stick to it."

It follows then, that the decision to perform a mood shift following a terror attack, to end it or to ignore the event all together, a decision that is determined ad hoc by local broadcasters, carries national significance. By engineering the intensity of public reaction to a violent event, broadcasters

actively shape its import or lack of it on public sentiments. Whereas news bulletins consistently report all acts of violence against Israeli troops and civilians, it is those events that are deemed grave enough to necessitate a musical mood shift that are more likely to become nationally significant and to mobilize the people and policymakers into a state of emergency.

Finally, in many radio stations, the tendency to replace *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* with contemporary pop music repertoire during terror attacks was also carried over to the official memorial days. Traditionally, the sacredness of these distinct days has been signified by the musical shift to the old homeland songs drawing on the themes of fallen soldiers, friendship, and sacrifice. However, once the new practice of “moderation” was implemented in times of emergency many programmers realized its convenience for memorial days. It enabled them to retain a stance of solemnity simply by selecting downbeat, laid back Hebrew pop rock ballads with reasonably sad feel, and increasingly choose songs whose content had nothing to do with commemoration. Notice that the logic of the memorial song category has not changed, only its artistic representation. The audience easily notices the shift of tempo with the onset of memorial days and is drawn to the appropriate commemorative mood. It is precisely because of the deep-rooted linkage between times of commemoration and times of emergency that not only are the latter traditionally represented by the vocabulary of the former but also transformations in the representation of emergency were soon to influence broadcasting during memorial days.

ZIONIST TEMPORAL REGIMES AND THE RITUALIZATION OF EMERGENCY

The ethnographic findings above shed new light on Zionist perceptions of time. Anthropologists have already recognized that not only is time culturally constructed but that different perceptions of time can exist within the same community (Rutz 1992:2). In particular, the national community adheres not only to simultaneous (and historic) time, as argued by Anderson (1991), but also to a mythic sense of time. It not only assigns meaning to the present but also “nationalizes” the past to recreate a shared heritage by freezing time beyond its contingency and playing on sacred or otherwise epic narrative forms (Singer 1996:321–322). At the risk of oversimplification, national time in Israeli–Zionist culture could be roughly associated with four distinct temporal regimes, implicated in the present study of radio schedules:

The modern-historic, linear sense of time that motivates everyday collective action of the imagined community, as formulated by Anderson’s simultaneity-in-time.

Jewish mythic time, marked by various religious holidays referring to chronologically

unrelated signposts in the ancient foundations of the Jewish people and experienced as circular (Yerushalmi 1982), reminiscent of Anderson's simultaneity-along-time.

Zionist commemorative time, reflected in the three days of commemoration from Holocaust to Independence that mark not only the modern foundations of the Israeli nation but also its incarnation as an emancipatory, semimesianic moment of redemption. Zionist commemorative time casts the modern 'secular' time in the mold of the mythic Jewish timeframe. For instance, the national days that commemorate in a linear fashion the modern chronicle from Holocaust to Independence are interwoven in the nonchronological, religious Hebrew calendar (Handelman 2004). Placed immediately after Passover, which marks the mythological birth of the Jewish nation, they too implicitly acquire mythological aura.

Time of emergency, reflected in wars, terror attacks, and disasters of national magnitude. On the face of it, emergency events present an acute instance of simultaneity-in-time. As people cling incessantly to the live news broadcasting to witness the unfolding of dramatic events they intensify the image of a living social body moving uniformly through historical time. On the other hand, much of the focus in emergency broadcasting revolves around the question of casualties: how many, how severe, and, most significantly, how many dead. Public attention centers on the sacrificial dead, those members of the community, above all soldiers, who died a violent death in the service of the nation (Handelman 2004; Marvin and Ingle 1999). The recognition that they had died so that the nation could live places the dead and the living in a single community of fate, an imagined community experienced not through historical time but through the mythic quality of simultaneity-along-time (Kaplan 2008a).⁸

What is important to note is how, against the backdrop of ordinary life, Israeli radio singles out the three other temporal regimes of Jewish religious holidays, Zionist commemorative time and times of emergency through a common bureaucratic logic of mood shifting whose rhythmic logic consists of three components: A distinction between the profane and the sacred, a climactic pulsation, and a cyclic sequence. First and foremost, radio broadcasts sustain a binary differentiation between the diverse programming of everyday life and the relatively uniform programming of special days and events experienced as sacred. This Durkheimian distinction between the profane and the sacred has long been extended from temporal aspects of religious life to those of modern secular culture (e.g., Goethals 1997; Leach 1961; Zerubavel 1981). At stake is a ritualized distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary, albeit one that doesn't entail a belief in the divine but rather provides a symbolic confirmation and veneration of collective values and emotions shared by members of the

community (Durkheim 1915).

Second, the rhythm is directional. As reflected in the Jewish and Zionist metanarrative called “from destruction to resurrection,” it comprises a climactic pulsation from low to high, from the morally inferior to the morally superior (Handelman 2004). Thus, as the mood shift following war and terror attacks replicates the climactic shift on Holy Days (both the Sabbath and religious holidays as well as the national memorial days) it may paradoxically induce, in addition to feelings of distress also feelings of elevation and reverence. Under such circumstances of collective conditioning emergency situations are likely to be experienced as morally superior to ordinary life.

Lastly, as with any ritual activity, the cyclic, recurrent character of the mood shift reinforces the individual’s sense of stability, security, and belonging to the community (Durkheim 1915). Consequently, representing terror attacks within a cyclic time frame underscores the qualities of an “interrupted system” (Kimmerling 1985). It enables members of the community to adapt to the shifting back and forth from routine to emergency and experience it as a steady, stable situation.

Public response to the Second Intifadah provides an illuminating case in point. Tamar Liebes and Zohar Kampf (2007) documented the media coverage of the escalating terror attacks from 2000 to 2005 and interpreted the increasingly mellow coverage overtime and fewer public demands for military or political response as an expression of collective “routinization.” I would posit, however, that at least on the radio the distinction between ordinary life and the disruptive events was unequivocally retained, albeit subtly, through the mood shifting techniques such as music moderation. The disruption was not normalized or neutralized but rather incorporated into a culturally available system of cyclic interruptions. A slight public signifier of the emergency situation could suffice to mobilize the people, not into political action, but into the commemorative mode, enhancing national identification through a sense of collective convening and belonging. Just as the weekly recurrence of the holy Sabbath does not invoke a sense of routine but rather feelings of solemn awe so too the erratically recurring terror event is not routinized but is framed as a cyclic occurrence that continually stirs public solidarity and feelings of elevation.

The result in such instances is a ritualization of emergency. Whereas coverage of emergency events is often characterized by “scriptless,” erratic reporting, coverage of commemoration rituals assumes a ceremonial, preplanned, and unifying character. Such was for instance the contrast between the worldwide televised coverage of the attacks of September 11 and the televised coverage of the subsequent commemoration rituals a year later (Blondheim and Liebes 2003). But when it comes to music broadcasting the disruptive event may be codified through the ceremonial genre much sooner.

Indeed, many American radio listeners reported that already during the first hours and days after September 11 they found that the music programming provided them with a source of console and alleviation (Carey 2002). In its role as mood enhancer the radio follows a preplanned script and assumes an integrative, unifying role. In so doing it breaks down the very distinction between the real-time, emergency quality of the disruptive event and its commemorative potential.

The Israeli case is all the more striking in this respect. Disastrous events situated centuries apart in Jewish history become linked through deep-rooted, common mnemonic devices of remembrance that condense not only the distinction between present and past but also between urgency and memory. Back in the eleventh century Jewish communities in Central Europe composed special prayers termed *Yzkor* (Remember) to commemorate the massacres committed by the First Crusaders. Instead of providing a chronicle of the events they were fashioned after the poetic style of the ancient *Selihot* prayers.⁹ Interestingly, during another period of mass pogroms in 1648–49, Jewish mourners instantly fitted the new catastrophe into the mold of the same *Yzkor* prayers composed almost five centuries earlier (Yerushalmi 1982:51). Still another three centuries later, the Zionist movement adopted a secular version of the *Yzkor* prayer to commemorate soldiers and civilians killed in the Israeli–Arab conflict, turning the vocabulary of *Yzkor* into the cornerstone of all commemoration rites (Sivan 1991). The current use of the commemorative mode in Israeli radio is an extension of the same pattern. Playing designated memorial day songs in response to terror attacks provides the musical-secular equivalent of the *Yzkor* prayers. The musical mood shift ritualizes the emergency event shortly after its actual moment of emergence. Under this faculty of simultaneity-along-time the threat of terrorism is codified as a periodic interference ad infinitum and thus incorporated into the very fabric of the community.

THE SELF-REINFORCING NEXUS OF COMMEMORATION AND EMERGENCY

What are the political implications of this ritualization of emergency? Consider the following scenario. On March 6, 2008, a single Palestinian gunman infiltrated a prominent Orthodox Yeshiva in Jerusalem and shot dead eight students. The harsh circumstances of the attack have led many radio stations to moderate their music dramatically, an uncommon practice ever since the dwindling of the Second Intifadah a few years earlier. I was struck by the choice of some major stations to air songs that were particularly popular during the peak of the Intifadah in 2002, a time when a series of mass suicide bombings has led the Israeli government to reenter the West Bank and seize major Palestinian cities. The operation, called “Homat Magen” (Defensive Shield), served by right-wing politicians as

proof that the Palestinian uprising could be uprooted by drastic military action (Wikipaida 2008). The current attack in the Yeshiva was likewise preceded by a period of tension. Hamas missile attacks on Israeli towns around the Gaza Strip aroused public demands to take military action.

In this context, the airing of memorial songs seems to carry a dual quality. On the one hand, the commemorative mode implies a suspension of active response. It provides a *modus operandi* for incorporating the novel instance of crisis into the mythic chain of earlier catastrophes. On the other hand, as the present is endowed with such mythic-catastrophic significance it can yield a pressing impetus for reinitiating a heroic, dramatic response. The renewed broadcasting of “classic” Intifadah songs associated with the climax of Palestinian terrorism could revive yearnings already heard in public to launch in the Gaza Strip a new version of “Homat Magen II” (Nachtom 2008), anticipating that drastic military operation could miraculously eradicate the new phase in the Palestinian struggle.

At stake is a self-reinforcing nexus between emergency and commemoration that goes to the heart of Zionist cosmology. Zionist framing of emergency presents a peculiar, dual motion. Representing disruptive events through the passive stance of commemoration strips them from their place in history and deters a political interpretation in terms of actors, cause, and effect. However, this passive, depoliticized stance has a complementary impulsion for grand, drastic action. Following Eyal Chowers’ (1998:654) discussion of semimessianic temporality in Zionist thought, a core aspect of Zionist activism is a sense of a rupture in historical time and a belief that the present offers an urgent window of opportunity for grand human action bordering on the supernatural.¹⁰ Chowers illustrates how such an impulse for urgent activism has prevailed among past Israeli leadership, professing that social reality in historical Palestine is wholly open to willful human intervention. This attitude legitimized the attainment of national goals that transcended rational predictions and ignored political obstacles on the ground such as the interests of the local Arab population or legal restrictions.

In other words, one impulsion in Zionist cosmology revealed in the commemorative mode is to reinterpret instances of disruption to ordinary life as instances of tragic-mythic past. These disruptions are extracted from politics and history and experienced as morally superior to ordinary life. Yet another impulsion is to reinterpret ordinary life as a condensed, urgent semimessianic timeframe that likewise ignores historical-political considerations and is open to heroic, human deed. Where instances of emergency are turned into ritual in the former case in a way that suspends collective action, the emergency situation can be magnified in the latter case to justify an otherwise unjustifiable collective action.

The radio coverage of the terror attack on the Yeshiva illustrates how both impulsions can form a

self-reinforcing, circular nexus. The immediate response with the broadcast of classic Intifadah songs has afforded the incident with mythic significance. Although the government in that particular occasion has chosen to suspend military action, we can understand how this meticulous encoding of tragedies through “mood shifting” can harbor a public impulsion to ultimately execute the long anticipated military action, action to be played out on an aggrandized scale far greater than political circumstances may demand.

CONCLUSION

My ethnographic findings from radio music programming and the subsequent analysis of Zionist time point at a curious linkage between commemoration rituals and the representation of national emergency. Israeli radio holds a central role not simply in communicating values of the national culture, but particularly in interpreting national time. First, radio programmers hold a strategic role in sanctifying the seemingly mundane qualities of popular music in the service of the nation. Pop rock music is typically associated with values of sub- or counterculture and is considered “profane” in that it is open to reinterpretation in and through use, seemingly possessing all the attributes of the nonsacred (DeNora 2000:23–24; Willis 1978:1). However, as nation-states often “ethnicize” global pop rock genres and tailor their cosmopolitan appeal to meet local consensual needs (Cloonan 1999; Regev 1996),¹¹ Israeli radio programmers ingeniously link specified pop songs to current events in ways that assign collective meanings to an otherwise homogenous–empty time.

In everyday life, music broadcasting reflects the workings of “banal nationalism.” It is like “the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (Billig 1995:8), accompanying the listeners wherever they go and providing a continual background for the imagined national community. It does so with minimal explicit “flagging,” or reminding of the national ideology. But in times of emergency or remembrance, when the flag is to be waved with fervent passion or lowered to half staff in solemnity, broadcasting schedules of most Israeli stations apply the bureaucratic logic of mood shifting, synonymously cutting through collective time. This strategic pendulum in radio programming bestows sacred, national meaning to popular music.

Second, this engineering of national time has implications for times of emergency. The musical mood shifts activate a commemorative mode that echoes mnemonic devices of Jewish remembrance and is carried over to occasions of fatal injury during war and terror attacks. Under this impulsion of commemoration emergency events are placed in a mythic timeframe that may suspend political reaction. But such mythic framework, in turn, can set off a complementary impulsion that foresees the

disruptive event as an urgent window of opportunity for grand, radical action. This dual notion of “suspended action” is central to Zionist cosmology and goes back to the essence of the grand narrative “from destruction to resurrection” underlying the establishment of the Israeli state. Rather than simply negating passive Jewish existence in exile, Zionist rituals such as the secular Yzkor prayers invest exilic existence with messianic impulsion so that passive suffering becomes a precondition for active salvation and possibly retribution.

The duality of suspended action can account for contemporary attitudes toward the threat of terrorism. One way to make sense of Israel’s variable, often erratic policy in the Israeli–Arab conflict is to explore how public responses to terror attacks alter incessantly between calls for self-restraint and calls for radical military action. I suggest that the urge both for action and for inaction are culturally legitimized and emotionally engineered by the collective management of national time, as in the case of radio broadcasting. Through its practice of mood shifting the radio sets off a transformative effect that can be best compared to the activation of the siren: it invokes not the alarm siren that warns the people to seek shelter in the face of danger but rather suggests the memorial siren that summons the people to a silent communion with its chain of sacrificial dead and promises to salvage the suffering of the dead through future heroic action of the living.

NOTES

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1. The novel *Song of the Siren* by Irit Linur (1991) is set in Tel Aviv in 1991 against the backdrop of the First Gulf War. The sound of the sirens warning the public of impending Iraqi missiles is Linur’s take on the mythological singing of the Greek goddesses.

2. Between 2004 and 2007, I conducted fieldwork on popular Israeli music played on national and regional radio stations and in public ceremonies. I was interested in particular with musical practices during memorial days and in other national occasions. The study consisted of observations in selected radio stations and in-depth interviews with music programmers, broadcasters and station directors in

most national and regional stations, live coverage of all music programming on designated days of commemoration, and participant-observations in selected public ceremonies of commemoration covered by radio stations. Pilot interviews in the public radio networks were conducted with the assistance of Noa Bergman. Subsequent fieldwork in regional stations was conducted in collaboration with Orit Hirsh.

3. This genre was developed by Jewish musicians of Middle Eastern and North African background influenced by Arabic music and has been systematically excluded from mainstream radio programming (Regev and Seroussi 2004). Mizrachi artists were typically placed in designated “ghettos,” limited slots in the weekly timetable. In recent years some mizrachi artists broke through the mainstream playlists by transforming into “light mizrachi” music based on pop style arrangements. Galit Saada-Ophir (2006) analyzed the subversive position of mizrachi music in the national culture given its Jewish–Arab border crossing characteristics.

4. Station 88FM, part of the public Kol Yisrael network, is the only Israeli station playing blues and jazz. It presents itself as the qualitative alternative to the playlist radio scene.

5. There is to date limited research as to how Israeli audiences react to such national-emotional engineering. A laboratory study found that among Secular and Religious Jewish listeners commemoration songs systematically trigger free word associations related to the emotions of mourning, nationalism and a sense of common identity whereas neutral love songs fail to trigger such associations of collective unity (Bodner and Gilboa 2009). These findings suggest that listeners indeed respond to musical mood shifting as intended by the programmers, but would require further elaboration through ethnographic studies.

6. For a cultural analysis of the interrelations between male friendship, sacrifice and national identification in some canonic Israeli songs of commemoration see Danny Kaplan (2006).

7. Chava Alberstein is a one of Israel’s top singers since the early 1970s. She is very much associated with Shirei Eretz Yisrael, although her more recent repertoire extends to soft rock, folk and traditional Yiddish music.

8. Although music mood shifting in times of emergency primarily invokes the commemorative, hence mythic timeframe, in rare instances it can also reproduce the quality of simultaneity-in-time. It is common practice in Israeli media to suspend reporting of soldiers killed in action until members of their family have been notified in person. But if music broadcasters “moderate” the music programming during the intervening hours, an experienced audience can spot the mood shift immediately and sense that “something has happened.” At this particular stage the music shift

becomes a source of information just like a news bulletin. Only after actual reports of casualties have been released the same music programming can turn to function purely in the commemorative, mythic frame. This is yet another example of how music programming can codify the functions of both the alarm siren and the memorial siren.

9. Selihot are the Penitential prayers recited before Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement considered the holiest of Jewish holidays.

10. Eyal Chowers (1998) discusses how Zionist cosmology conceives the present as a rupture, an interlude during which homogenous–empty time does not acquire its meaning neither through divine guidance nor by the unfolding of reason. He compares this sense of “sundered” history to earlier formulations of national history shaped by European Enlightenment. The latter projected on modern homogenous–empty time a teleology of rational progress that framed history as a casual structure that must be “deciphered by the reflective mind and serve as the foundation for action and inaction” (Chowers 1998:664). Thus the human actor was expected to favor historically rational deeds over vain ones that go against the march of history. Despite their strong teleological logic such secular understandings of history were likely to encourage political interpretation of current events as they unfold in localized circumstances. In contrast, Zionist cosmology introduced a novel temporal consciousness that zoomed in on the formless nature of history and enshrined the total malleability of human conduct irrespective of the rational flow of events.

11. Noteworthy in this respect is the seemingly paradoxical position of the military network Galei Zahal, which held a pioneering role in promoting rock music in Israel since the early 1970s. It combined rock programs with promotional and educational content to motivate military service among the youth. The linkage between rock and militarism, made possible through their common relation to youth, neutralized the rebellious, antiwar sentiments initially associated with rock elsewhere (Mautner 2001).

Editor's Note: *Cultural Anthropology* has published other essays on the use of radio, including Brian Silverstein's "Disciplines of Presence in Modern Turkey: Discourse, Companionship, and the Mass Mediation of Islamic Practice" (2008), and Laura Kunreuther's "Technologies of the Voice: FM Radio, Telephone, and the Nepali Diaspora in Kathmandu" (2006). *Cultural Anthropology* has also published a number of other essays on Israel and the Middle East; see Lori Allen's "Getting By the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada" (2008); Galit Saada-Ophir's "Borderland Pop: Arab Jewish Musicians and the Politics of Performance" (2006); and Alex Weingrod's "Changing Israeli Landscapes: Buildings and the Uses of the Past" (1993).

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