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THE ACCULTURATIVE COSTS OF RHYTHMIC BELONGING

Lauren Mark
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I examine the workings of rhythm, intensities, and affect through narrative memoryscapes of acclimating to life in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Specifically, I distinguish underlying rhythmic characteristics of each city, analyze how repeated exposure to Israeli rhythms and intensities progressively alter my relations to others, and look at how experiences of rhythmic dissonance affect my acquiescence to dominant rhythms. I begin by offering a brief theoretical framing of rhythmanalysis in its conceptualization of everyday rhythms as a means of analyzing culture and of marking identification in its reliance on social processes. I then examine affect and rhythm's use in analyzing emergent experiences, before they are assigned static representations. In particular, I draw attention to affect's ability to focus on potential agencies that arise in moments of relational intensities as walking and cycling bodies enter new assemblages in public spaces.

KEYWORDS

rhythmanalysis, narrative, acculturation, belonging, walking, cycling

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> *The air contains a charge and an energy of people and vehicles all moving briskly. It comes at my back barely discernibly, propelling me forward into spaces momentarily absent of bodies or objects that otherwise rapidly close up before me, not unlike the vanishing stretch of land that Moses is said to have released from his temporary hold on the Red Sea. Each breath fills my nostrils with the moist Tel Avivian air. Its fragrance carries the promise and reminder that I walk streets nestled on the cusp of the Mediterranean, though no visible or auditory trace of the sea inserts itself amid the bustle and din of traffic. However, the crisp freshness of each inhalation unmistakably whispers "ocean," even as the pale-yellow desert sand dusts the edges of every corner.*

Famously, Deleuze (1994) speaks of an encounter as an involuntary confrontation with "something in the world" (139) in the form of a "*relation* that is sensed, rather than understood" (669) that "*forces* us to think" (139). My aim in this paper is to work with a modified version of that proposition, one which takes the following form: an encounter with the strange familiarity of a city forces us to think in terms of the sensed relations of which worlds are composed. The sensed encounter with a city in its many forms generates opportunities to take up and be taken up by the relations of specific forms of urban life. And it does so in ways that foreground rhythmic intensities that almost demand to be written while also evading our efforts. This is the experiment that I undertake in what follows.

My arrival in Israel happened after a seven-year sojourn in Taiwan. This sojourn colored every Israeli encounter with an embodied Taiwanese cultural sensibility. Resonant encounters with Taiwanese individuals in the United States had prompted me to move to the Mandarin speaking island with a one-way ticket, site previously unseen. I went in search of a sense of home promised by the relationality of these encounters. During my first few years, while doing my best to become conversant in Mandarin Chinese, nonverbal exchanges taught me most viscerally about Taiwanese culture. My previous experiences of big city life had little relevance in Taipei, despite it being Taiwan's capital. I learned the rhythms of patience, where cyclists slowed to a nearly stationary halt on sidewalks behind pedestrians strolling at leisurely paces. Pedestrians alike silently acquiesced to fellow walkers who inexplicably stopped in the middle of a walkway to think or pull out their smartphones. As a friend of mine describes it, navigating in Taipei is like fording a river whose continuous movement enables a sort of harmony.

I learned in Taiwan that the navigation of shared spaces quickly becomes dimensional as well as directional, equally expressive as it is functional (McCormack, 2013), with territorializing repetitions, or refrains, taking-place through the ex-

pression of impulses. I felt the reverberations of a culture's priorities shaped the ways people made room for one another on narrow sidewalks and in overcrowded buses. These unofficial interactions created ripples with far lengthier repercussions than decorum directed, "official" transactions, such as those between paid employees and customers.

Seven years into finding such a home, I packed my bags again. This time for Israel, for the promise of my Israeli partner whom I had met in Taiwan. This departure and arrival were also lined with the promise of a possible new home, or at the very least, the promise of unlocking insights about the culture that had nurtured my partner into adulthood.

Departures and arrivals have the effect of throwing you into the middle of things and times. One question that I frequently found myself asking when navigating new spaces in Israel was, "How do we make room for others' rhythms and even incorporate them into our own?" This question in turn gave rise to a second question, "What happens when we don't want to be affected by others' rhythms and yet find ourselves inescapably subject to their influence despite our wishes to the contrary?" These questions led to an examination of a cultural politics of prioritization through the rhythmic *haecceities* of individual bodies momentarily navigating within shared spaces, as well as their affective influences. Scholars such as Jacques Ranciere (2010) have considered the role of sensations and sensibilities in shaping corporeal capacities that give rise to a body politic. In this light, rhythm functions as a means to manage subjectivities by enfolding them within collectivities (Henriques et al., 2014), however transitory.

We find similar questions posed elsewhere. No stranger to global travels or cultural geography, Doreen Massey (1994) recognizes that we construct the identity of place at least in part from our "positive interrelations with elsewhere" (169). The process of finding home through the felt experiences of rhythmic belonging or non-belonging can be sensed in the gestures, intensities, and movements of a new milieu long before it can be expressed in a new language. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we can think of rhythm as the passage from one milieu to another, involving coordination and variances between space-times. Something similar underlies Lefebvre's suggested approach to rhythmanalysis as a form of "listening out" (2004, 94) for the temporalities, moods, and atmospheres of places. He likens rhythmanalysis to an aspect of becoming, where the practice of thinking with and through the body is deployed to measure rhythmic relations and their influence on everyday life. Each body attunes to various aspects of experience directly

connected to perceived gender, habits of moving, size, perceived attractiveness, and a host of other factors. In the context of this paper, rhythmanalysis offers a useful tool to look at the process of acculturation as one that involves becoming attuned to multiple rhythms and intensities. I offer a rhythmanalytic reading of a series of encounters with unfamiliar cities in order to explore how differences show up and are felt in these encounters.

The shape of these encounters, and my narration of them in what follows, are influenced by my training as a contemporary and contact improvisational dancer. Drawing from months of cycling and walking through Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, I consider some of the rhythmic characteristics of each city as well as how repeated exposure to the rhythms and intensities of these cities progressively alter my relations to others. I also inquire into how experiences of rhythmic dissonance, or arrhythmia, affect my qualified and sometimes partial acquiescence to dominant rhythms.

Elements of the various rhythms of these Israeli cities provide the context for the paper. Tel Aviv boasts a reputation for being Israel's most cosmopolitan city. English signage adorns places of public use, from product labels in grocery stores and pharmacies to bus signage and more. Many of those in the service industry, such as bank tellers or postal workers, are proficient in English. Tel Aviv houses the center of the Start-up Nation (Senor and Singer, 2009) and offers the main attraction for international investors who flood convention centers looking for new projects in which to sink their money. The city is not governed by the same adherence to Jewish law as Jerusalem. While Jerusalem holds revered sites for three of the world's major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the laws of Judaism staunchly govern the city's rhythms. Jerusalem's dedication to tradition generates a distinct atmospheric intensity that distinguishes it from other Israeli locales. The Sabbath siren signals a halt to all official or machinic activity throughout the streets each Friday afternoon, and the few businesses that remain open throughout the weekend are staffed with non-Jewish employees. It is also an intensely contested site, which warrants more attention that I am able to devote in this paper. The political struggles for autonomy between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as those for sovereignty between secular and religious Israeli Jews fill every corner of its cities with material remnants. At times, protesting bodies obstruct major streets, or wafts of tear gas linger along university campuses. On a regular basis, unrepaired cracks in light rail car windows stare back at passengers. They are fresh scars from rocks thrown out of retaliated frustration against the Israeli government, taken out on transport gliding between Jerusalem's Arab and Jewish neighborhoods. As

a non-Jewish sojourner, my experience touches on the year and a half that I spent encountering a vastly different rhythmic atmosphere formed by a confluence of all of these political factors. I do not presume to speak for anyone else.

In Israel, I am unmistakably marked as a foreigner by my East Asian appearance. However, similarly to how Yi Chen embraces rhythmanalysis as a tool to approach the dynamism of social processes, thoughts, and feelings that govern identity formation (2017), I choose not to begin by framing my encounters with the painfully set parameters that governed my legal existence, which included institutionalized disadvantages and neglect that I struggled with as a non-Jewish immigrant throughout my time in Israel. I choose to engage with rhythmanalysis for its potential to guide us toward a plurality of forms of experiences that may evidence or problematize the construction of wider cultural formations as they arise through everyday experience.

The paper is organized as follows. I begin by offering a theoretical framing of rhythmanalysis for its inroad to analyzing culture and marking identification through everyday rhythms. I then think with affect and rhythm to analyze emergent experiences. I draw particular attention to the affordances that arise from foregrounding affect to focus on emergent agencies and affective capacities. These affordances are highlighted in moments of relational intensities as walking and cycling bodies negotiate pathways in public spaces. I conclude by attuning to the costs incurred from the prevalence of certain contextually based relational intensities.

Theorizing Rhythm and Affect through Rhythmanalysis[1]

> "In everyday life, what is relative to social relations appear to every 'subject' as necessary and absolute, as essential and genuine…the acquired rhythms are both inherent and social."
>
> —Lefebvre, Régulier, and Zayani "The Rhythmanalytical Project" 1999

In a series of works, Henri Lefebvre (1974, 1996, 1999) focuses on urban spaces as productions of social practices, at the center of which is a concern with the rhythmic movements and gestures of bodies (2004). This is made even more explicit in his writing about rhythmanalysis with Catherine Regulier and Mohamed

Zayini (1999). They ask that the rhythmanalyst sensitizes herself to the ongoing, dynamic nature of moods and atmospheres to take in the contextual temporalities encompassing human activity in settings such as a square or a market (1999. Others have extended Lefebvre's analysis of rhythms and their effects, drawing on various fields to demonstrate "the pervasive nature of rhythms as organizing principles that underlie all spheres of experiences" (Chen 2017, 1). Harfouche, for instance, recognizes the role of thought and actions evolving expression across a person's past and living memories as a rhythmic manifestation, or "unconscious symbiosis" (2006, 9) which govern her interactions with others. This temporal symbiosis makes room for memories, the "real," and the imagined to fill perceived, conceived, and lived spaces (Lefebvre, 1974) in tandem.

Rhythmanalysis draws on sensory experience in order to foreground the pre-cognitive ability to perceive the nuances of interaction between social agents. The rhythmanalyst thinks with and through the body as a tool to measure rhythmic relations and their spatiotemporal interruptions in everyday life, registered as varying intensities of feeling by the body (McCormack, 2013). In this respect it echoes Lauren Berlant's (2016) argument for the need for corporeal training, or a re-forming of attention when attempting to gain access to different kinds of worlds. As someone who has spent over twenty-five years of her life dancing, living and perceiving has always been for me a multisensory, embodied experience more saliently colored by intensity than any other parameter. These sensitivities led to attunements that shaped subsequent habit formation through these embodied encounters, unfolding as a direct result of my reactions to these encounters.

Habit participates in the maintenance of worlds. Moving to a new place means a loss of habit and an encounter with the strangeness of the habits that maintain that world. Connerton (1989) emphasizes the importance of bodily practices in the formation of habits in his book, *How Societies Remember*, defining habit as knowledge and remembering in the body that ultimately cultivates bodily understanding. Wise (2000) echoes the centrality of habitual motion and thought for nomads who actively work to re-create a sense of home. He clarifies the external origins of habit formation that seep in before they take root as conscious repetitions of conditioned reactions:

> Our habits are not necessarily our own. Most are created through continuous interaction with the external world…We are the result of our own reactions to the world, and are as such an enfolding of the external (303).

Massumi understands affect as embodied experience described in collectively recognized ways (2002). He urges a shift in focus toward an active exploration of how the social gets made through a "felt reality of relation" (39), bolstering the processual elements that underlie experience. Grossberg emphasizes affect's purpose in animating values through bodily effects that define investments in specific realities (2010). He sees affect as a means through which people are anchored into their lives, which lend context to intuited senses of belonging across time. These belongings create resonant spaces that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called "milieu" (313), through periodic repetition. If we consider affects to be culturally formative in this way, it is worth contemplating how varying agendas and speeds in public spaces can give rise to cultural rhythms that dictate feelings of belonging.

Felt relations include feelings of curtailment in addition to those of belonging. Seigworth and Gregg speak to power and marginalization's confining capacities to act in certain relations, whose sustained relational states give rise to habit formation against one's will (2010). They credit this process of unwillful identity formation to the pressures of conforming to a larger social rhythmic coherence, demarcated by affective markers of belonging and non-belonging directing individuals to interact in ways that allow uninterrupted relatedness. My interest lies within the repeated practices of physicalized power that create marginalized bodies which seek to realize a world beyond current norms. The recognition of these practices of power and the inclusion of marginalized voices call the seemingly self-derived agency of individualized actants within an environment into question. Protevi (2009) cites affects' contagiousness as the key to their "inherently political character" (50) through their bodily effects. In her work on political protest, Gould (2010) situates affect as an organism's response to whatever "impinges on it" (26). The political contagion of affect extends well beyond orchestrated protest. Its political nature begins with the seemingly benign, soon to become habitual daily rhythmic practices of how we learn to board buses, cross intersections, or squeeze through narrow sidewalk spaces on foot with cyclists. Repetition after repetition, they gradually shape habituated ways of being in particular places.

Feeling My Way into Methodology

While rhythmanalysis allows us to understand how embodied habits play out through social and spatial practices, Highmore (2004) reminds us that the rhythms of the everyday remain elusive. This elusiveness may be the reason few studies

that claim to use rhythmanalysis as a method read or deploy it in quite the same way. Multiple scholars who have undertaken journeys with a rhythmanalytic orientation (Edensor, 2011; Hall, Lashua and Coffrey, 2008; Highmore, 2002; McCormack, 2013) seem to conclude that rhythmanalysis is more a suggestion or invitation than a rigorous methodology. Nevertheless, rhythmanalysis has been pursued through a range of qualitative methods, from interviews and ethnographic/participant observations, to multi-media approaches such as visual recordings, sound diaries, and visual/textual performance ethnography. Several scholars have made use of time-lapse photography to map out the functionalities of public life in small city spaces and street performances (Harrison-Pepper, 1990; Lyon and Back 2012; Simpson, 2012; Whyte, 1980).

My approach here is to draw on the situated rhythms of immersive participant observation, based on eighteen months of residence in Israel. I did so while reflecting on the partiality of an individualized, situated perspective alongside comparisons of other global rhythms beyond my immediate surroundings. Embodied, nondiscursive realities have guided the past two decades of my life. Ann Cooper Albright, a veteran dance scholar who considers dance a means to bridge divides between an academic self and physicality, writes how certain forms of dance enable one to create a 'responsive' body that attunes to the experience of one's internal sensations and the outward flow of movement between bodies (2010). Nigel Thrift (2008) also advocates for the utility of dance in cultural sensitization, for its ability to "reconstitute" us through attuning to cultural specificities nuanced by "touch, force, tension, weight, shape, tempo, phrasing…even coalescence" (140). Erin Manning (2009) views affectivity or relations as virtual movement, taking place prior to observable changes. Both she and Brian Massumi emphasize rhythm's inhabitance between the virtual and the actual. Manning (2009) views rhythm as pre-acceleration, feeding on the momentum that allows the passage of the virtual into the actual. Massumi (2009) considers rhythm at the level of microperception, where relational "multiplicities of tendency, reactivated capacity, [and] affective beginnings" (5) are foregrounded. I often find that affects abound in the nuanced sensations of repetitious actions that undergird relational beginnings, such as whether one accepts a door's weight in a catch and rebound, or by the weighted momentum or force that someone uses to send a door swinging in the opposite direction. While recognizing that my bodily experiences may be different from others', this rhythmically and affectively attuned approach speaks to the cultural persuasiveness of rhythmic belonging within the process of acculturation, as it involves contours formed by material elements.

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This corporeal training complements the kind of attunements suggested by rhythmanalysis. Chen (2017) urges researchers to begin their design by exploring sites of rhythmic production that include rhythmic assemblages or entanglements. Lefebvre, Regulier, and Zayini (1999) have pointed out that our attention is naturally drawn to rhythms when we suffer from an irregularity or disorderliness, such as momentary disruptions in the course of everyday life. Bennett (2015) has examined disruptions caused by the unanticipated snowfalls, and Thorpe (2015) has considered how residents have to re-establish familiar rhythms and connections in the aftermath of earthquakes. I take the framing of 'irregularity' that occurs from changing the underlying material of one's everyday life in the context of acculturation.

Lefebvre (2004) coined two terms to describe harmonious and dysfunctional interrelations of varying rhythms: eurhythmia and arrhythmia. The former describes when rhythms unite in normal everydayness, and the latter describes rhythmic discordance that is both the cause and effect of suffering. Although eurhythmia and arrhythmia do not solely exist in opposition to one another, I describe how over time, a predominance of asynchronization becomes untenable as an embodied, lived condition. Lefebvre (2004) coined an additional term to describe the physical retraining one must undergo to acclimate to new surroundings. He outlines the term "dressage" to describe the physical bending, or entrainment that ensues from reforming physical comportment to fit dominant rhythms.

The physicality involved in acculturating across dynamic movement assemblages involves multiple layers of accommodation. In urban metropolises, one cannot assume that a daily commute will simply involve weaving a path through places that eventually become familiar (Edensor, 2010). In densely packed cities, it is nearly impossible to travel in one's own bubble. In her methodological compilation of rhythmanalytic methods, Lyon (2018) invokes dressage to account for ways that pedestrians accommodate both machinic and human moving objects. The dressage in Israel often involves negotiations with fellow travellers concerning who will advance first. These continuous "collective choreographies of congregation, interaction [and] rest" (Edensor 2010, 70) give rise to permeating rhythms that Seamon and Nordin (1980) calls "place ballets." These choreographies occupy a state of being that encompasses both learned patterns and improvisation. When first exposed to situated place ballets, it is essential to invoke a peripheral awareness of others' movements and intensities. Mutual in situ negotiations can be brokered through a receptivity toward eye contact. In addition to these types of awareness,

I focus on the proximity and speed that power people's movements around me. In this context, arrhythmia can occur with a misalignment of rhythmic movement patterns. These can later cause internal arrhythmias wrought by dressage entrainment.

In what follows I focus on the ingrained affective traces from the repetition of hundreds of similar encounters. These "individual acts of remembrance" from transnational contexts (Basu 2013, 130) linger in my body each time I unconsciously step as close as possible to the edge of a curb to be the first in a throng of people to cross a busy urban road. I had once hoped that my body would revert to contextual rhythms and conditioned ways of being when I returned to more collectively minded environs such as Taiwan for extended stays. However, I could not shake the new patterned ways of being from my body. Kasmani refers to this sort of inward returning as "thin attachments" for their returning change "unfolding in other forms, arresting us ever so tenuously" (2019). It felt as though affectivities remained within my body that ran counter to my instincts of disinvesting in those affects, physically and habitually drawing me toward one dimension while I simultaneously desired withdrawal.

Some Insights into Israeli Culture

> "Culture is a negotiated and contested space through which one embodies a possible self."
>
> —Sekimoto, "A Multimodal approach to Identity," 2012.

The capacities to act and to be affected alongside passages of forces or intensities construct frameworks that deal with power and cultural identity. The cultural identity in this case emerges from observations of how people choose to navigate scenarios, where they prioritize their own agendas or adapt to the needs of their immediate environment. For Harfouche, rhythm is inscribed through practices, and interactions, understanding, and performances can encompass a range of meanings from national aspirations to daily encounters (2006). Borch echoes this confidence by stating that rhythmanalysis can shed light on society's ways of "promoting subject positions" (2005, 95). In this sense, attuning to rhythms can

help make manifest the internalized performances of particular cultural contexts. This has particular resonance in the context of this paper insofar as it reminds us that, in the process of becoming attuned to the rhythms of particular cultural situations, we always risk failing. We might think of this in terms of the risk of being a '*freier*'.

In Israel, there is a pervasive drive not to be a *freier*, which loosely translates to 'sucker' in English. This mentality treats life as a zero-sum game. Based on an analysis of five hundred Israeli news articles that mention the term, Bloch clarifies that *freier* avoidance involves "refraining from voluntarily undertaking any activity that would entail an effort not resulting in the actor's own immediate interests or not taking advantage of a situation that presented itself [even if taking advantage includes foregoing]…common courtesy" (2003, 131-132). She points out five overarching characteristics: "concern for face, disregard for rules, individualism, competition, and machismo" (p. 138). Bloch suggests that the *freier* can also represent death in a country that raises its young to value and adopt war tactics of survival, where conditions under fire equate being a *freier* with death.

Bloch (2003) surmises that a distaste for *freier* related behavior is connected to a desire to disassociate from an identity marker of the Jew in exile. When one is never considered to be native, or to belong, one must do everything in one's power to survive. Ironically, new immigrants to Israel, often referred to as 'new ascendents' (*olim hadashim*), can find difficulty when assimilating to the culture of *freier* avoidance. Bloch notes that new immigrants carry a contrary pride when they are perceived by Israelis as *freiers* for their commitment to following rules and consideration for others. They wear the *freier* badge as an educational tool to embody an alternate moral compass, where "there's no need to push, that there's no need to honk, that there's no need to cheat on your taxes" (2003).

In 1997, The L.A. Times reported that the aversion toward being a sucker pervades every element of Israeli life, from conducting the most routine task to brokering peace between countries (Ilan, 2007). When he was prime minister in 1998, Benjamin Netanyahu was publicly recorded to have told students, "We are not *freiers*. We don't give without receiving." The de-emphasis on exercising sensitivity and giving without the promise of receiving in routine tasks are cultural elements embedded in the rhythms of local life. Whereas standing in line or paying are somewhat regulated transactions, the negotiations of passage through public spaces further signal ways that these principles are integrated into the culture of impromptu encounters with strangers.

Rhythmic Strains on Foot and by Bike

> "The rhythmanalyst sees the walking figure as not being delineated by an environment, that he or she is the environment."
>
> —Chen, *Practicing Rhythmanalysis,* 2017

I. Bus Rituals in Jerusalem

The Sabbath siren echoes throughout the entire city every Friday afternoon, signaling each weekend's arrival. Without fail, the streets empty of cars and the stores close shop for the weekend. This strictly mandated respite perhaps contributes to the urgent bustle throughout the remainder of the week, when grocery shopping, hair appointments, and other errands must be completed. Jerusalem's population is 63% Jewish, 32% of which are religiously observant and 34% of which are Orthodox believers, or Haredi (Cidor, 2018).

I fumblingly cross the chilled cobble-stoned street to the nearest bus stop, which at 7:30am, is already thronged with waiting passengers. I stand at what I determine to be the end of the line of backpack adorned students, army members of about the same age clad in olive green, and 'religious' Jews with their black hats, overcoats, and head scarves for the women. At the back of the line, I awkwardly try to avoid the unrelenting direction of their gazes, focused past me down the street, awaiting glimpses of the bus, whose arrival time is highlighted in an electric sign at the base of the stop's awning.

A bus, not mine, slowly rolls up, crammed full with standing and seated bodies. Unblinking eyes from within fixate on my face as the machine pauses to let new passengers board. As the seconds tick by, the pairs of eyes keep hold of me, without the crinkle of a smile or visible lightening of a new breath.

At this point, I cannot help but attribute this intensity to my ethnic appearance, as it seems to be more concentrated on my person than on the Caucasian or Middle Eastern faces around me. In the face of the gaze I am suspended, powerless to escape its focus. I suppose that one could classify the nature of this interaction as a form of 'relatedness,' but it is one entirely unsought, and I long for the bus

to hurry its departure - anything to interrupt this encounter. The identification that I see in those passengers' eyes is one devoid of warmth – it labels me as a strange sort of fruit that merits the unblinking duration of an unrequested gaze.

Habits and rhythms of seating on a bus reveal a lot. Coming from an East-Asian culture where no one dares to occupy the clearly labeled priority seating set aside for the handicapped, the elderly, and the pregnant in every unit of public transportation, or claim a non-priority seat without first looking around to see if someone else might be in greater need, my rhythmic default is quite different. It is as if most of the people around me cannot hear the preparatory overtures before the official downbeat start of the music, so they do not begin listening until the signal of that first downbeat.

The first bus leaves, followed by the one that I've been waiting for. As it comes to rest, people from all corners of the stop—behind me, to my right, and to my left—begin swarming toward the calculated arrival of the narrow boarding entryway, leaving me adrift in my spot as if no line had ever existed. When I fail to press forward as well, the doors close after about eight to ten bodies have crammed inside, having already swelled the container with its contents.

Months of mornings pass in a similar fashion. I have difficulty with the idea of pushing past elderly people too slow to approach the bus doorway or climb the raised step to board. I eventually learn that it doesn't matter if I can't swipe my bus pass immediately upon embarking, which leaves me room to squeeze in at the very last minute. The primary inconvenience of this last-minute position is the necessity to leap out of way of the metal prong that operates the opening and closing of the door each time the bus comes to a stop, to avoid being physically smashed by the prong or berated by the driver.

Negotiating these situations is a prerequisite for learning to become familiar with the habits that hold worlds together. With its limited public transport routes and crowded streets, Jerusalem exists in a perpetual state of rush hour. The meaning of "being acted upon" begins to take on two separate meanings. The immediate meaning involves receiving the ebbing brunt of others rushing ahead, being left behind in their wake, like a dancer unable to keep time with the rhythm and pacing of the movement phrase. The second, more transformative meaning involves succumbing to the overwhelmingly dominant rhythm as a means of survival rather than as a voluntary choice. I cannot stand motionless in the middle of a choreographed space when everyone else is rushing forward around me,

especially when I know that I can easily pick up the movements. Pragmatically, I cannot repeatedly wait an additional fifteen to twenty minutes for the next bus to roll around. I need to advance to my destination. At this point, smashing myself in between the door at the last minute seems like the only recourse to moving forward while enacting minimal aggression on those who crammed their way in first and on those who are unable to cram their way forward.

II. Tel Aviv – Arrhythmic Sensations of Non-Belonging

Street-Side Conversations:

When the time comes to move to Tel Aviv after six months in Jerusalem, I initially interpret it as a move toward salvation. I anticipate the space to breathe, free from the fermata of arresting stares and the crushing currents of too many bodies in too few spaces. I eagerly await the anonymity promised by global cities. Yet, to my dismay, I do not find Tel Aviv to be quite the cultural haven that I anticipate.

As I emerge from the post office to unlock my bike, a woman approaches me on her own bike transporting a young child. I look up, my peripheral vision having taken stock of the mass rushing toward me, expecting to be queried for directions or propositioned to purchase something. Cornered among the parked bikes by the rapidity of her approach, I hurriedly try to ready my limited stock of Hebrew phrases.

"*Sleeha, at sinit or yapanit?" (Excuse me, are you Chinese or Japanese?)*

I have been reduced to a mere transaction not even worthy of the precursor, hello. The shock must have registered on my face, because before I can settle into the next beat of an appropriate response, she suddenly speaks again, "*Sheeha*" (*Sorry*) and rides off back to the main street from which she had come. Suddenly, my mind feels as lethargic as my tongue. Why had I not asked her why she thought it was okay to set the example for her child that it was acceptable to treat people as curiosities instead of as humans? It is probably because I still didn't know how to say the word "curiosity" in Hebrew.

While attempts at verbal communication are an improvement over the wordless stares that I experienced in Jerusalem, interactions like these unsettle or puncture the rhythms of the slow process of becoming acculturated. I have learned not to take offense when a cashier cashes me out without making eye contact or conversation. Yet the fact that my encounter with this woman has no transactional

precursor makes it seem all the more jarring. The irony is not lost on me that Israel is a nation of immigrants from various countries and ethnic backgrounds, with an official history of less than seventy years. And still, varying expectations result in our rhythmic incoherence: am I a resource to be queried for information as one would ask about a purse in a market, or am I eligible for congenial pleasantries before diving into any sort of exchange?

Acclimatizing to Tel Avivian Cycling Norms

Much like the process of boarding buses in Jerusalem, cycling in Tel Aviv can be a matter of survival. Streets or sidewalks fortunate enough to be lined with bike pathways allot space carefully, with lanes just wide enough to accommodate a single bike. Tel Aviv had brilliant city planners who ensured that no corner of the city would be 'dead space' by combining residential housing with commercial enterprises. In many cases, they layered apartment units above shops in low-rise, sand-colored buildings. Consequently, the sidewalks and streets are shared spaces between meandering tourists exploring the city and locals commuting about their daily lives. The shared space between pedestrians and cyclists results in a concentration of vastly differently paced bodies traversing the same few square meters outside restaurants and storefronts. One can turn away from the allure of a window display to nearly have one's foot run over by a determined cyclist.

Despite the arrows indicating desired traffic flow on bike lanes on each side of the road, most cyclists, including myself, ignore them in favor of the side of the street that is shaded from the desert sun, or the side whose upcoming traffic lights allow us to continue our trajectories without pause. This enables most cyclists to ride at an exhilarating pace, which often turns into a game of chicken when two cyclists come head to head from opposite directions on the narrow bike lanes when they are clear of pedestrians emerging from the covered storefronts. This game usually involves little contact, and tends to boil down to speed and focus, like two trains racing toward one another on a lone track at varying speeds. Focus is frequently reduced to the unilaterality of a cyclist's gaze. The individual open to negotiation, which I almost always play, ends up giving way, interrupting momentum to brake or veer off the path. Most of the time, I first search for an inkling of recognition or willingness for connection from the other cyclist, hoping for negotiation before the moment of collision. When it usually fails to materialize, I begin to coast or tap on my brakes and swerve to the side to avoid the oncoming onslaught.

In moments like these, when speed equals power, anything other than a multi-speed bike tipping its rider forward at an aerodynamic angle barreling forward with conviction seems like a display of inequity. As my vehicle is neither of these, and I frequently ride with the weight of multiple layers of clothing to ward off the desert wind, I am typically no match for these exemplars of determination even if I were to contemplate death by biking. If some sort of negotiation were to be made, I would happily yield at an "excuse me" or an apologetic smile before a moment of near collision. I often wait for the pause that comes from a moment of mutual recognition, where two cyclists transform from two anonymous vehicular obstacles to two people trying to make their way in the world. In Asia, people frequently offer a facial expression or gesture that indicates an openness to being acknowledged or greeted (Scollon, Scollon and Jones, 2011). Over time, repeated experiences lead me to believe that this uncompromising speed is the city's default, and I resign myself to get out of the way. At this point in time, I do not yet understand *freier* avoidance, or of its prevalence in daily encounters.

In the midst of all of this forward-looking momentum it sometimes feels impossible to fathom other modes of being. De Certeau (1984) views walking as an act that "implies relations among differentiated positions" (98). He identifies walking with having its own rhetoric, derived from the fact that a walker constitutes a here and a there and has the task of "introducing an other in relation to [an] 'I'" (99). De Certeau implies that walking serves as a conduit for social models and cultural mores. These social and cultural rhetorics of walking apply to multiple forms of locomoting, including cycling. The differentiated positions that regulate locomoting in the city viscerally imply to me that there is no "us," only an "I" and multiple "others," to whom I likewise continue to be an "other."

Merging Rhythms

Once I find a solid patch of sidewalk, pedestrians and cyclists, many on motorized, electric versions, become anonymous entities with whom the fleetingness of our contact almost invalidates any affective reaction that may arise from momentary wrongs. Several times, I inadvertently come close to running over elderly pedestrians supported by walkers or canes, who appear unexpectedly around shrubs or walled corners. I try to excuse cringing feelings from having nearly run them over by telling myself that I managed to avoid doing them actual physical harm.

In instances without the excusable blindness wrought by corners and ninety-degree blind spots, I shift the blame of near collisions onto pedestrians of course. After all, they are standing too close to bike lanes, encroaching on my limited territory where speed is sanctioned. Over time, I learn not to blame myself for not having shifted rhythms to accommodate those around me. My two-wheeled vehicle gives me right of way, and right of speed.

I tell myself that my transition to a mode of being that I would have once labeled without hesitation as assholery can be chalked up to the sentiment conveyed by the expression, 'when in Rome.' In actuality, I claim the agency to act on those who are unable to match the speed of my bicycle. I act in selfishly privileged ways on those with less agency, who have no recourse but to be acted on due to their reduced pedestrian speed while I perpetuate the city's more rapid rhythms.

After having been exposed to the repetition of multiple similar encounters, at a certain point, I subconsciously begin imitating these rhythms, to my distaste. Waves of guilt wash over me for treating fellow commuters as obstacles in my path, after having habituated myself to negotiating travel across spaces in tandem *with* others in Taiwan. In doing so, I recall Borch's (2005) picture of urban life and its rhythms, which he distills as repetition and imitation. In my eagerness to join the prevalent rhythms underlying cyclists in the city, I effectively mute prior considerations of those around me.

Conclusion: Rhythmic Echoes

> "There are practical implications for researching cultural politics when the identities of 'subjects/form' are radically re-conceived. At the heart of the issue is the question of agency and the nature of how 'power' relays in social interactions."
>
> —Chen, *Practicing Rhythmanalysis* 2017

Lefebvre once said, "to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration" (2004, 27). Both Lefebvre and I underestimated a rhythm's power to linger once I gave myself over to certain rhythms. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define territory as "first of all, the critical distance between two beings of the same species" (314). They then elaborate, "critical distance is not a meter, it is a rhythm. But

the rhythm, precisely, is caught up in a becoming that sweeps up the distances between characters, making them rhythmic characters that are themselves more or less distant, more or less combinable (intervals)" (320). When the rhythm of a current or energy becomes sufficiently overwhelming, it sweeps over milder whispers of dissent. This overarching merging of rhythm requires the presence of affect to address issues of power. The failure to actualize ways of relating unaligned with omnipresent rhythms lends a new dimension to well-worn terms such as "marginalized," "subaltern," or "subjugated." In this case, it is a matter of being acted on what creates the disappearance of alter-rhythms, newly made absent.

To return to my initial guiding questions, "How does repeated exposure to Israeli rhythms and their intensities affect or alter an immigrant's relations to others over time?" and correspondingly, "How does rhythmic incoherence or dissonance contribute to one's willingness to join in dominant rhythms?" – both questions can be answered in kind by the same framework. Rhythmic coherence, or eurhythmia, involves cultural synchronicity. In my cultural transition from Taiwanese to Israeli mores, I discovered through embodied experience how unsynchronized rhythms, or arrhythmia, reflect a lack of mutual cultural sensibilities and engender a lack of mutual agency. Transitioning to an environment with relatively stronger planes of intensity and faster speeds resulted in a loss of personal agency to lessen intensities or slow my pacing to arrive at fields of mutual coordinated, relative comfort with fellow pedestrians and cyclists, which had happened effortlessly in Taiwan.

In answer to the question asking how exposure to these rhythms altered the ways I related to others, the deceptively simple decision to adapt to local prioritizations of speed also involved the adoption of certain cultural values, such as prioritizing the maintenance of my personal agenda over surrounding circumstances or other people. This required me to reframe those people as obstacles to my personal goals or ends, instead of viewing them as ends in themselves for personal connection, or as autonomous beings who have an equal right to prioritization in shared public spaces, regardless of their speed. In short, I began identifying with the local culture to avoid being a *freier*.

My daily round trip commutes regularly lasted forty to sixty minutes each day, a more substantial duration than any other interactions that I held with people outside of my predetermined social groups. Consequently, the bulk of my interactions with Israelis consisted of encounters on Jerusalem and Tel Aviv's sidewalks

and bike lanes. The affects surrounding these relations of movement single-handedly reshaped my perception of Israelis and my understanding of the probable ways that I might interact with them. My default mode of relating to Israelis, as I came to embody it, became an extension of *freier* avoidance—one of competition, with each body prizing its own agenda over the well-being of others. In doing so, I lived in a state of perpetual perturbation. While I adapted my behavior to match the dominant rhythms of both cities, this gave rise to a self-loathing and anxiety from acting in accord with cultural values that I inwardly did not want to espouse. The eighteen months that I spent in Israel had de-territorialized the approach to navigating public space that I had absorbed in Taiwan on an ethical and rhythmic level. The disjuncture between these collectively oriented values and each self-serving action further de-territorializes me each time I take action. With each act where I propel myself forward across others' paths, I widen the gulf between my present self and the version of myself that I had so enjoyed actualizing every day in Taiwan while navigating between possible modes in the ongoing processuality of subjectivity.

Harfouche (2006) observes rhythm's inscription through practices and the potential of interactions to reflect national aspirations through daily encounters. Borch (2005) voices similar sentiments about rhythmanalysis' ability to reveal society's prevalent ways of "promoting subject positions" (95). The Israeli culture of *freier* avoidance may be in part the result of a survival instinct chronically "on call" aiming to compensate for past generations of exile and a current positioning among countries who consider its nationalized existence an injustice and a threat. Regardless of its origin, the dressage that I ultimately adopted in this culture proved not only to be a deterritorialization of my preferred values while in Israel. The entrained habits lingered in my body well after I left the culture and society. Now, having returned to the United States, I contend with all of these entrained habits, in their transfer from cycling to driving as my daily commute. The further removal from my co-commuters' humanity through our engine-driven metal boxes makes it even more difficult to resist prioritizing my own needs above the overall safety of the road.

This approach suggests that rhythmanalysis can be useful in helping us attend to the actualization of contextual energies and lingering cultural influences. While this account is written solely through the eyes of an outsider and immigrant, similar accounts could be drawn from other sojourners or immigrants who return to their country after spending significant periods of time abroad. At each seemingly innocuous crossing of multiple nationalities on a crowded

college campus pathway or global city sidewalk, individual prioritizations of self and other generate an atmosphere of locality. Affective moments of yielding or insisting coproduce a space and rhythm that give rise to newly attuned cultural sensibilities and embodied memories while also breaking down prior attunements. It is in these moments that the process of acculturation takes place.

Endnotes

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