Televised Tears: Artifice and Ambivalence in Islamic Preaching

Yasmin Moll

Televised Tears

Artifice and Ambivalence in Islamic Preaching

Yasmin Moll

.,,,,,,,,,,,,,,, , ,,,,, , , , , , ,,,,,,,,,,,, ,,,,, , , ,,,, , ,,,,,,,,,, , ,,,, , , , , , , ,,,,, , , , ,,,, , ,,,,,,,, , , , , ,, , ,, ,,,

While on pilgrimage in Mecca in 2017, the famed television preacher Amr Khaled live-streamed his pious supplications on Facebook. Khaled is one of Egypt's "New Preachers," *al-du'ah judud*, so named because their styles of television preaching are unprecedented within the country's four decades of Islamic Revivalism. Khaled, like other New Preachers, launched his transnational career on Iqraa, a television station founded in 1998 by a Saudi media mogul as the world's first Islamic satellite channel. Drawing on music video, celebrity talk-show, and reality television genres, Iqraa's Egyptian producers sought a *da'wa mubhira*, a "dazzling" pious propagation, in contrast to what they deemed the unimaginative programs of Salafi preachers. From this perspective, Iqraa, unlike Salafi channels, appreciated that Islamic media encompasses yet also exceeds religious programs aimed at correcting doctrinal understanding or enjoining ritual observance. And unlike secular television channels, Iqraa understood that divine parameters of permissibility and prohibition are neither irrelevant nor indifferent to creative media. In this space, Islamic media could be at once edifying *and* entertaining, morally serious *and* visually dazzling.

Khaled's own media production continued to display this ethos long after his departure from Iqraa. Against the iconic backdrop of white-clad pilgrims circumambulating the Ka'aba, the preacher tearfully invoked divine mercy and succor for the Muslim community. He also supplicated more specifically for the well-being of his online viewers and subscribers. The video led to a torrent of public criticism and satirical memes centered both on Khaled's entreaties to God to give His attention to the preacher's followers and on Khaled's attention to the mediation of his pious pleas: critics circulated stills appearing to show the supplicating preacher surreptitiously checking out his own image.[1] For many, this was irrefutable visual evidence of Khaled's religious hypocrisy and yet another troubling indication of the "commodification of religion" (*al-tijara bil din*) enabled by the emergence of privately funded satellite television, of which celebrity preachers like Khaled are both symptom and cause.[2]

Such unequivocal (and familiar) criticisms of the New Preachers are not the focus of this essay. Instead, I examine the ambivalent critiques of their generally enthusiastic followers. A state of mixed feelings, ambivalence entails being at once charmed and repelled.[3] Such simultaneity of opposing affects is especially significant because many of the viewers I met self-identified as followers of the New Preachers after rejecting the Salafi preachers who figure so prominently in Egypt's grassroots da'wa circles. Salafi preachers made my viewers feel "emotionally distressed," "uneasy," even "traumatized." This had to do with their message—"This is forbidden, that is forbidden, everything is forbidden except what we say"—and their delivery—"They scream, they shout; they point their fingers and wag them at us." When people told me this, they would invariably adopt a gruff tone, frown fiercely, and scrunch their noses. Salafi preaching—its content and form—was unambiguously repellant (*munaffir*) for many of my interlocutors. This quality led to viewers describing their inability to feel "close" to Salafi preachers and embark on the particular program of virtuous self-fashioning they advocated.

Yet while television as a visual medium allows these viewers to snub Salafi sermonizing as deficient, this affordance also enables ambiguous appraisals of preachers they otherwise find appealing. For even as viewers feel they could "see for themselves" how their favorite New Preacher is visibly moved as he proclaims his love for God, the close association of television in Egypt with dramatic acting also makes it possible to see such proclamations as "merely" performed. This association was productive within the particular da'wa niche of New Preaching. Indeed, to defend himself after the Facebook fiasco, Khaled made clear that artfully mass mediating his performance of a ritual practice was not an abnegation of his duty as da'wa practitioner but its fulfillment. "It is my *job* to make people love God and His worship through good television," he protested.[4] Piety's cultivation on a mass scale depends on a skillful attention to audience. But the viewers whose attention Khaled and other New Preachers sought made fine-grained distinctions between instances when professional media proficiency was an important part of the persuasive apparatus of the preacher and instances when such proficiency discredited the sincerity—and thus the public efficacy—of his moral exhortation. On-camera crying during pious supplication, *du'a*, was one important pivot point.

Du'a are petitionary prayers distinct from *salat*, the ritual prayers Muslims perform five times a day at set times. Salat involves a set of prescribed bodily postures and utterances. By contrast, du'a, which literally means "calling out," is a personal appeal to God for His aid in language that is improvised in the sense of being the petitioners' own words, although the supplicator may incorporate Quranic verses and Prophetic phrases in appeal. The Prophet Muhammad reportedly characterized du'a as "the weapon of the believer" for its worldly and salvific efficacy. Du'a is thematized within Islamic traditions, especially Sufi ones, as creating "a spontaneous and sincere intimacy with the divine"; it is often accompanied, however, by what may seem opposed to sincere spontaneity: feigned weeping, *tabbaki*.[5] Feigned weeping, closely associated with Islamic Revivalism in Egypt, is an expression of pious humility through which religious adepts, motivated by reverence for God, pretend to cry in order (ideally) to develop the capacity to shed real tears in the future. In addition to self-cultivation, however, televising a preacher's supplications was for the Islamic media producers I worked with a powerful technique for the cultivation of intimacy with viewers across the screen. Du'a as pious self-expression

with an audience of one—God—is imagined as an especially moving addition to mass-mediated da'wa as an other-oriented practice of persuasive affect. This is particularly so when such supplications are tearful. Ending each television episode with weepy supplications became Khaled's calling card.

Egyptian Muslims outside the piety movement generally dismiss such weeping as insincere, no matter the context.[6] When it is done on television, however, so too do many pious practitioners. Among the viewers I worked with, feigned weeping was more likely to be construed as an appropriate technique of pious discipline in some settings (for example, in Qur'anic recitation, at the conclusion of Friday congregational prayers or in individual prayer at home) and not others (in a broadcast studio, as part of a television episode). But why should televised tears be troubling? To address this, I explore the differential evaluation of tears by Islamic television producers and viewers. How does the mass mediation of preacherly weeping—and the aestheticization of such weeping through televisual techniques—provoke ambivalence about this valued ritual? And what does this reveal about the potentials and limits of mass mediation for the concurrent cultivation of pious subjects and intimate publics?

I argue that specific mass mediations of feigned weeping made time-honored ideals of ritual efficacy less relevant as tears came to be part of a new category of disciplined practice that turned on acting, on skilled artifice. Here the principles of modern dramaturgy as habitual, rehearsed embodiment coexist uneasily with piety's demand for ritual self-cultivation. Islamic television producers contended that on-camera weeping was a valuable technique for cultivating piety across the screen. For them, televised tears were a performative tool for creating conditions felicitous to da'wa on a mass scale. But when these producers approached weeping for its performance value and not only for its authoritative ritual efficacy, they inadvertently enabled a new form of judgment on the part of their pious viewers, raising a question irrelevant in the original context: Is the preacher acting? Are these *televisual* tears, and not only televised tears—are these tears produced *for* the television camera?

To be clear, on-camera weeping as a ritual innovation fails for many viewers not necessarily because it lacks precedence. Writing about ritual as key for socially enacting values and their attendant idealized lifeways, Joel Robbins shows how changes in established ritual forms engender disapprobation both when they do not

fully realize, in the sense of exemplify, existing values as well as when they become a "negative example" through successfully realizing what is disvalued.[7] As a ritual, broadcast weepiness flops in instances when it does not fully exemplify the pious sincerity always expected of a preacher or when it *only* exemplifies a theatrical skill unseemly to ethical exhortation as vocation. It succeeds when it exemplifies both.

At first glance, this might seem like a familiar story of religious people across different traditions who aspire for immediacy, either by decrying semiotic forms marked as media obstacles in their pursuit of unmediated contact— or copresence—with God or, relatedly, by failing/refusing to see some media as media at all and attributing to them the qualities of immediacy and transparency.[8] But far from valorizing immediation, my interlocutors, whether producers or viewers, made the "dazzling" mediation of divine revelation an ineluctable aspect of its successful worldly propagation and a key point of contrast with Salafi revivalists. The difficulty, then, may be not only that Islamic television preachers are trying to straddle in their ritual performance two distinct regimes—pious enskillment and skilled representation—but also that they are trying to do so as preachers who are not, in fact, as dramaturgically practiced as they need to be for their media to be efficacious. Put differently, viewer ambivalence may be provoked less by the line between pious preaching and professional performance, between da'wa and drama, becoming too blurred and more by the failure to expertly sustain the distinction between televised tears and televisual tears that is ultimately internal to dazzling da'wa as both media strategy and ethical aspiration.

The Artifice of Intimacy

Many Egyptians, religious and secular, disparage the New Preachers as opportunistic novices lacking the authority to expound on Islamic matters. They are not trained muftis or theologians but accountants, salesmen, and artists. For their followers, however, these preachers are morally credible because they are ordinary, "just like us," although just a bit further on the pious path. Sincerity, not authority, is what matters. Hania, whom I met early in my fieldwork, explained that "Amr Khaled doesn't give religious legal opinions (*mish biyifti*) because he doesn't have the authoritative background for this. . . . But because I love him, I will listen to him. He has an emotional authority (*sulta shu'uriya*)." Hania does not claim for these preachers the religious authority their critics deny them—instead, she locates their efficacy on a different plane altogether, where feel-

ings reign. The visual medium is especially opportune: being able to *see* the preacher is critical to her sense of intimate connection.

Emad, Iqraa's Cairo manager and head of New Preacher Mustafa Hosny's media team during my 2010–13 fieldwork at the channel, was fond of reminding us that "television is not radio."[9] This refrain was almost a mantra for the team. It was a reminder that television called for content that was qualitatively different from that sufficient for exclusively auditory media. But it was also a critique of others within the social world of Islamic television who seemingly did not grasp— whether because they lacked the imagination and technical know-how to grasp or, worse, because their incorrect theologies precluded them from grasping—this all too obvious distinction and thereby treated television *as if* it were radio in their da'wa media. From this perspective, the ability of the da'wa movement to attract adherents who would otherwise remain uninterested in the path of piety was predicated on its activists' ability to exploit television's capacities for visual dazzlement, or *ibhar*, and by so doing reveal piety's path as one of pleasure, not pain. Remaining indifferent to such affordances was nothing less than shirking the ethical duties incumbent on being a professional promoter of piety.[10]

In addition to dazzling viewers, television afforded the technically savvy and creative preacher another equally important, and related, capacity: the facilitation of a sense of intimate connection between him and his viewers. The Arabic word I am translating as "intimacy" is *hammiya*, the root of which is *hamim*, which means "close" or "intimate." *Hamim* can refer to a particular quality of friendship; in the Quranic lexicon it connotes a devoted friend.[11] *Hammiya* was important for Hosny and his team because they viewed its presence among their viewers as sustaining an individual's commitment to the path of piety once embarked on. While dazzlement was crucial to initially capturing attention, intimacy was key to its continuation. And as in dazzlement, being able to *see* the preacher on screen mattered greatly, making the visual techniques of intimate connection—that is, its ability to create a constellation of viewer feelings toward the preacher characterized by warmth, familiarity, and goodwill—subject to sedulous attention by Hosny's team. Hosny himself was attuned to the importance of visual presentation from his first career in sales. His job training underscored the primacy of face-to-face interaction, and he took that to be broadly applicable to his new career as a television preacher. "The visual (*al-mar'iy*) accounts for half of

the presentation," he once explained in a meeting. "If you have two people presenting on the same subject, and one is on television and the other is on cassette, of course the one on television will have more influence (*ta'thir akthar*) because you can see his body language."[12] But producers also recognized that embodied affective-moral qualities will not appear naturally to the viewer, whatever the inner state of the performer, but rather require skilled know-how to convey across the screen. Proficiency in the technical and creative affordances of television helped constitute the content and aesthetics of religious publicity, and helped make possible intimacy as *artifice*, as skilled creation.

In what would become a communication studies classic, Donald Horton and Richard Wohl introduce the concept of parasocial interaction to describe the media production of "intimacy at distance." Motivating their inquiry was the then-new radio and television talk shows emerging in the US in the 1950s and adopted by Islamic television preachers in Egypt as early as the 1960s. They argue that these broadcast forms are marked by a "simulacrum of conversational give and take" between the performer and the spectator. While being parasitic on the face-to-face interaction it simulates through resemblance, this mass-mediated interaction creates its own kind of intimacy through a specific set of media strategies. The point of these techniques is to reach for something im-mediate within the condition of mediation.[13] At the same time, the notion of the parasocial captures the way producers and viewers are aware of mediation yet feel as if they are in immediate intimate contact because of—not despite—the artifice of mediation, its expert creating. While making public the "off-stage" artifice on which the power of "on-display" authenticity rests is for many a damaging exposure of insider know-how,[14] in the parasocial interactionintimacy is acknowledged, even marveled at, as an artifact of publicity, as a socio-technical feat, by all participants.

The distance between the parasocial as theoretical construct by communication scholars and the parasocial as tacitly theorized practice by Islamic television producers—whose professional expertise is formed partially through being credentialed students of mass communication—is short. Here, the parasocial interaction is theologized as enabling intimacy at a distance between believers and God through intimacy with the expert human mediator of God's words, the preacher. Through an initial rapport with the preacher, viewerly self-cultivation of a relationship to God marked by

nearness and heartfelt sincerity through willing obedience to His commands—that is, by piety—becomes more possible.

My viewer fieldwork findings broadly support this production-side assumption. Hania, to take one example, had first encountered Khaled aurally, on cassette (or was it a CD?), but when she saw him on television, she began to feel that she "now had a different relationship to him. Now I can see his reactions, his body language, all this makes me closer to him and his credibility rises. I believe him more because I can see that he is *sadiq* (sincere), that he is not acting." Closeness for Hania was predicated on her evaluation of the preacher's visual performance as sincere, a quality she opposes in this conversation to acting.[15] But, from the producers' perspective, Hania's ability to see sincerity across the screen was predicated on this quality as an artifact of artifice, of skilled creation. And every aspect of the program production, however seemingly small, was significant.

For example, Soha, the director of most of Hosny's programs for Iqraa during my fieldwork, aspired to create an "intimate ambience" (*gaw ma'luf*) through deploying a variety of camera angles.[16] Her preferred shot was the medium shot—a waist-up shot capturing the subject at mid-distance—because it enabled the illusion of direct eye contact with the viewer. The close-up shot, where the subject takes up most of the screen, might do this, but Soha explained its relative pitfall: by focusing on the face and eyes of the performer, it invites the viewer to experience the world *as someone else*. This actually ruptures the intimate conversational ambiance of the program, the illusion of a give-and-take between performer and spectator criterial for the parasocial interaction. The point is not that viewers identify so closely with the preacher that they lose their own perspective; rather it is that they identify just enough to feel that the preacher is "close" to them (*urayib*) and therefore someone whose own moral judgment and religiously informed ethics merit serious consideration and perhaps adoption by them as their own.

Alongside camera angles, camera movements aspired to a sense of mutual interaction within a one-way broadcast. There were three cameras in the studio, one positioned straight at Hosny in a static medium shot frame and two others located at parallel 45-degree angles to the first and used for panning and zooming. In the control room, Soha could see all three camera frames on separate screens; her main job was directing the movement between them, thereby offering the viewer different perspectives on the unfolding performance

and creating a sense of program participation. By contrast, a single camera, especially when coupled with too many close-ups, actually inhibits spectator immersion by making the performer's experience the singular focus. Indeed, visual mobility through multiple cameras afforded viewers a more privileged experience than the preacher because they had a freedom of ocular movement that the preacher lacked—*they* were watching *him*.

In addition, the camera movement calls attention to the parasocial quality of the interaction, to its televisual context. On television you can inhabit perspectives impossible in real life. By showing the artifice, in the sense of skillful creation, of preaching as professional performance, the director imagines that viewers' sense of intimate connection to the preacher will be heightened because his personal pretense to artifice, now in the more familiar sense of insincerity, will have been diminished through the acknowledgment that this, ultimately, is television. Again, while religious practitioners often desire a sense of immediacy through "disappearing" the medium and fact of mediation,[17] here intimacy is aspired to through *foregrounding* the process of its mediation. These complicated strategic calculations of what media techniques will elicit what kinds of audience assessments became even more knotty with the introduction of lachrymose narrative.

Heart Talk

The production of a pious sincerity viewers like Hania could believe in also took the discursive form of "speaking from the heart," captured by the title of Khaled's first television program, *Words from the Heart*. The show catapulted him into mass stardom as a preacher, a professional trajectory that gained even more steam when Iqraa—then the only existing transnational Islamic satellite channel—signed him on and gave him creative oversight for their Cairo-based programming. While Khaled's tenure at Iqraa was brief, the form he debuted would become over the next twenty years closely associated with a succession of newer New Preachers on the channel. Such programs interwove the long-standing genres of homiletic storytelling based on the lives of Quranic prophets, Prophetic hagiography (*qassas*), and noncanonical hortatory preaching (*ma'wiza*) with the modern confessional modes of personal storytelling that animate the melodramas of talk shows and dramatic serials alike.

Tears are central to these genres and, for fans, pleasurably anticipated.[18] In what Lila Abu-Lughod calls the "melodramas of the real" of Egyptian talk shows, for example, ordinary people tell of their extraordinary suffering at the hands of official ineptitude or familial indifference, provoking in viewers at home visceral responses. "True, it makes one cry," one loyal viewer shares with her, "but it is really good." Abu-Lughod argues that an intense focus on the individualized self and its interiority is common both to melodrama and to piety as self-fashioning.[19] And just as Egypt's elites disdained melodramas for their exaggerated sentimentalism during her fieldwork, they lambasted popular Islamic television programs for maudlin excess during mine.

For Islamic television producers, however, melodrama as a mode of vulnerable self-disclosure was invaluable to normalizing the fragility of piety. Iqraa's producers imagined that part of instilling love in ordinary youth for Quranic and Prophetic imperatives was having the preacher speak about his attempts and failures—his up-and-down, zigzag story—to get closer to God and embody the Prophet's praxis in a way that was moving and memorable, frank and heartfelt. Practitioners commonly gloss this type of performance as belonging to *al-raqa'iq*, a genre aiming to "soften the heart" so as to make it more receptive to divine dictate. But *Words from the Heart*'s truly pioneering aspect was less that Khaled, as a preacher, spoke from his heart and more that he invited others to do so on-screen, whether they were the newly "repentant" celebrity guests[20] or individual participants from the in-studio audience. Unlike the highly specialized and circumscribed jurisprudential domain of fatwa talk—which the New Preachers and their audiences in general stayed well clear of—heart talk was an inclusive genre of legitimate public comment.

By televising heart talk, Khaled—or, more accurately, Ahmed Abu Haibah, the creative brain behind this format as Khaled's debut producer and an influential advocate for new forms of Islamic television—created a distinct ideal for Islamic media. The religious program would be a mass-mediated *fadfada*, a colloquialism for conversational exchange that is intimate and from the heart, the kind of conversation you would have with your best friend over tea and biscuits or late into the night on the phone. That a few tears would be shed during such talk is only natural, and Khaled's guests and studio audience often cried. Abu Haibah augmented the affective power of such tearful moments through dexterous editing and well-chosen sonic accompaniment. He also included at the conclusion of each episode what

he saw as another novelty for Islamic da'wa media: the preacher's tearful pious supplications.

Abu Haibah televised the tears as part of a broader attention to the visual mediation of pious affect and their attendant personal narratives of ethical self-transformation that *Words from the Heart* pioneered.[21] Televising du'a offered him and, later, the Islamic television producers I worked with on Mustafa Hosny's team at Iqraa, an excellent opportunity to mass mediate intimacy so as to include within its affective ambit not only the preacher as supplicator-in-chief, but also, ideally, his imagined at-home audience. But in addition to the intimacy they created, televising the preacher's personal supplications accomplished another important and related aim: they framed watching the television episode as a worshipful activity, a nonprescribed form of *'ibada.* Muslims usually supplicate at the end of their individual daily ritual prayers and at the conclusion of the Friday mosque sermon and congregational prayer. With cassette technology in the late 1970s and 1980s, these sermons and their supplications were recorded and circulated widely within da'wa circles. As Charles Hirschkind has shown, cassette sermon listening in everyday contexts—during the daily commute, at home, in coffee shops—was for many da'wa practitioners an exemplary form of pious self-cultivation.[22] On television, the New Preachers' du'a marks the end of the episode, even as the discursive content of this episode is not a sermon and its viewing in no way ritually prescribed. However, inserting the supplication within the episode frames its viewing as an act of piety. While this might seem parallel to cassette sermon audition as a pious technology, the framing is important because of the orthogonal quality of New Preaching programs to authoritative forms of ritual performance and speech. Unlike the cassette's amplification of the in situ mosque sermon through a later despatialized dissemination, the television episode is not typically a broadcast of a ritual performance that would have occurred anyway; rather, it is an audiovisual artifact that only exists as a television episode.

Moreover, the du'a as a technique of pious framing is important for *New* Preaching programs because of the self-defined "dazzling" nature of its form and content, which could resemble a celebrity talk show, a reality competition, or a melodrama. While for Salafi adepts listening to their favorite preacher sermonize on cassette enacted an Islamic counterpublic precisely in relation to such mass entertainment media, which they saw as irremediably secular, the New Preachers and their followers approach this media more contingently.

Dazzlement, however, is a double-edged sword: the programs are self-consciously intended as innovative contributions to religious revivalism, but the absence within them of what have become—through the dominance of Salafism within the piety movement—conventionalized markers of religiosity make the legibility of this contribution somewhat tenuous. That the preacher would be in jeans and clean-shaven, that he would play the guitar or collaborate with a pop singer, that his audience would intermingle by gender, that there would be a cadre of hip hijabis in charge—all departures from the conventions of pious gatherings, mediated or face-to-face— necessitate the active inscription of "conventional" piety. For producers, tearful supplication offered a means of doing so. For their viewers, however, such tears on camera could become occasions of religious ambivalence: Some performances of this ritual innovation were more successful than others, as the next two sections explore.

The Drama of Da'wa

We saw how for Hania watching Khaled on television facilitated her evaluation of him as sincere. This was not the case for everyone. Mohammad, an older viewer who used to attend Khaled's in-person religious lessons across Cairo, told me that his perception of Khaled turned negative with television. He zeroed in on Khaled's tears. Islamic theological traditions extensively thematize pious weeping, often recognizing that it might require practiced effort.[23] This recognition is based on Prophetic sayings recommending feigned weeping, *al-tabakki,* in devotional contexts. Simulating weeping in the present is geared toward inducing actual weeping in the future. This understanding of pious weeping as a "rehearsed spontaneity," in Saba Mahmood's felicitous phrasing, makes sincerity for Egyptian pietists more about correct intention—here, pretending to cry to be able to in the future weep out of pious reverence for God—and less a matter of synchronous congruence between inner feeling and outer expression.[24] Mohammad, like other New Preaching viewers, adhered to this teleological construal of disciplined self-cultivation.[25] But still he and other viewers expressed misgivings about feigned weeping as an authoritative practice when it was performed on camera or, more precisely, *for* the camera. In doing so, they would often invoke the perils of *riya,* a particular kind of religious hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy generally involves pretending to be attached to religious beliefs or rites when indifferent or even adversarial to them.[26] Riya is a specifically *visual*

hypocrisy—performing an act of worship or a pious practice with the intention of *being seen*. Desiring that others see you is criterial for riya, as its Arabic etymological link to sight underscores. Riya raises a special conundrum for the Islamic television preacher and his viewers;[27] the line between visual dazzlement as the skillful creation of intimacy at a distance and visual hypocrisy as the instrumentalized artifice of celebrity can be thin and all too fuzzy. The more that da'wa was tied to the dazzling world of entertainment, the more it seemed like "just acting," which is how Mohammad explained his reservations:

> When Amr Khaled is making supplications and crying and then, all of a sudden, he puts on a big smile and says "See you in the next episode" this takes me out of the *mood* [English] he created. It makes clear that Khaled is not himself living the mood he has created for me. He is acting. But you can't act in religion (*ma'infish timathil fi al-din*). If we were shooting a film, fine, I would praise him for his acting skills. But if he is making supplications and we are all crying because he is, then he can't just suddenly switch out of the moment and smile—then we know he wasn't crying from his heart.

In a telling reversal of the usual roles, Mohammad questions not his own (in)attentiveness to pious exhortation, but the preacher's. What, exactly, was Khaled paying attention to? The camera and its mass projection of his image? Was he asking his viewers for a reverent responsiveness, embodied in tears streaming down their faces during heartfelt pleas to God, to which he himself was a mere camera-ready pretender? Brian Larkin has shown that inattention involves attending just enough to realize that one does not have to pay attention.[28] Here, inattention to the divine is figured through attending more than is warranted to the attention of others, those watching the episode and perhaps impatient for its conclusion.

Significantly, skepticism about the sincerity of preacherly tears was not limited to viewers: Islamic television insiders themselves were sometimes incredulous. Nawal, an Iqraa staff translator, told me that she once received an unedited program by one of the channel's female television preachers and was disturbed to hear the director telling her she needed to start crying. When I asked Nawal if feigning weeping was a valid way of moving others to tears, as per the Prophetic tradition, she quickly retorted, "Not on television. People don't tune into religious programs to watch good acting." It is telling that in remembering the director's off-screen

instructions to the television preacher, Nawal used the Egyptian colloquial imperative *'ayyati* rather than the classical Arabic *ibki*. The former has none of the gravitas of its classical cognate and is more likely to reference the bothersome crying of children than the worshipful tears of respected figures. Her reservations speak more broadly to the conundrum presented by the mass mediation of devotional discipline.

Nawal is troubled that the preacher's tears are scripted according to the conventions of television drama, of "good acting." Here, it is the episode's director who sets the criteria for appropriate embodied enactment in ways that privilege considerations other than feigned weeping's orthodox intent of cultivating an attitude of reverent awe. The disjunction between what the television preacher is inwardly feeling (impatient? eager to please?) and what he is outwardly doing (weeping in pious supplication) is not forgivable in this instance as an "inadequately formed self"[29] but rather incriminatory evidence of a self too oriented toward the performative demands of the camera.

It would be a mistake, however, to overdetermine the link between the specter of visual hypocrisy and the television medium. Islamic theologians have long been anxious about the possibility of a disjuncture between true internal sentiment and its external tearful expression, especially in homiletics and da'wa. According to Linda Jones, medieval Islamic juridical texts and preaching manuals demonstrate recurring concern with the correct modalities of preachers weeping and their relationship to what she calls the "authenticity" of the feelings they provoke in others. Weeping that is done in private is on the whole viewed as sincerer than weeping done with an audience. Even popular literature from the time "satirized such preachers for feigning their own tears or provoking weeping in others as a ploy to fool an unsuspecting audience into donating money or gifts."[30]

Reservations about an incongruity between inner disposition and external behavior are commonly associated with Protestant theological sensibilities.[31] Indeed, while medieval Christian devotional aids taught "the craft of wepyng" as a way to attain divine succor, the Reformation approached pious tears as signs of inner sentiment, not learned aptitude with supplicatory efficacy. Tears could perhaps display repentance but definitely could not be a means of atonement.[32] Nevertheless, even within religious traditions that generally take for granted the otherworldly power of embodied signs, the criteria for ritual efficacy are invariably contextually determined. The specifics of who is weeping, when and

where, figured prominently in premodern Islamic theological assessments of various forms of public religious performance. Such contextual distinctions continue regarding television preaching and mass-mediated religious publicity more broadly and continue long-standing considerations of temporal and spatial conditions, bodily etiquette, audience reaction, individual intention, and the damning temptations of adoration and avarice, even as contemporary contexts of visual mass-mediation threaten to overwhelm these factors.

Importantly, the capacity to critically assess public performance is itself a learned one. As Gregory Starrett has shown, the significance of rituals is an object of widespread debate in modern Egypt; children are taught in school to read meanings into the Islamic tradition's authorized bodily dispositions and thus, more broadly, learn "to interpret aspects of social reality as having meaning beyond those which they proclaim or manifest directly."[33] Indeed, Mohammad and Nawal, both graduates of this schooling, feel they can parse the preacher's tears for what they "really" show—showmanship, not religiosity.

Nevertheless, on-screen weeping was not automatically dismissed as acting. Tears on camera were at times scorned as insincere and at others appraised as "from the heart." These differing evaluations emerge at the intersection of religious reasoning and religious publicity's technical mediation. They invite attention to how ritual disciplines, to be effective within a viewing context powerfully shaped by mass media's affective conventions, need to themselves be dramatically televised. And that is the crux of viewers' ambivalence. Television demands acting, sure—Mohammad concedes that if Khaled were an actor in a film he would give him high marks for his performance—but is the acting genuinely impelled by reverence for God or reverence for audience ratings? While of course some weepy television preachers may have the right intention—only God really knows—this intention is made structurally suspect by the context of its embodied performance. Importantly, this ambivalence does not invalidate affective display but makes it more powerful through further scrutiny. As Marion Katz puts it, "Precisely because weeping was an index of piety, it was subject to the suspicion of hypocrisy."[34] The next section takes up an example of suspicions successfully defused.

The Preacher's Passion

Moez Masoud's first Arabic language program for Iqraa—*The Right Path*, broadcast in 2007—was one of the most popular series produced by the channel. Its major theme was the stock New Preaching one that piety, far from being an onerous renunciation of worldly delights, was a condition easily attained within an aspirational middle-class life of movie watching, music listening, and museum visiting.[35] Producers during my fieldwork wistfully remembered the program, which was shot in scenic locations such as London streets and Red Sea waters, as setting the standard for a dazzling da'wa that their limited budgets could only rarely attain. But what the viewers I spoke with most remembered about the series was a specific one-minute segment, which several interlocutors spontaneously held up as evidence of Masoud's sincerity. In this segment, Masoud speaks outside in front of the Nile: "Let's speak, let's tell the story of our condition and this internal struggle we are having in these times. [The poet says to God]: "*Forgive me!*" Do you see how simple the words are? This is how it should be, this is natural. "*Forgive me, I should have come to You long ago, crying with regret.*" At this point, Masoud suddenly stops. The scene, accompanied by a mournful instrumentation, cuts to a panning shot of the Nile and surrounding buildings. When we return to Masoud his eyes are red and puffy. He begins again, quoting the unnamed poet:

> "*Forgive me [Lord], I should have come to You long ago, crying with regret, and asking for Your forgiveness. I lift my palms to the sky and draw nearer to You. How did I forget my Lord when He never forgets me?*" Now pay attention to this part: "*I wish to tell You that I love You.*" He says it like that! This is inside of all of us, we wish to say that, "I love You," he is already saying that, but we want to say it with sincerity and with our limbs manifesting this sincerity through obedience. We all desire to reach this condition.

One viewer noted that her eyes welled up while watching this scene, and she repeated Masoud's words to herself. She held up her own response as evidence of Masoud's sincerity—his words affected *her* because they so affected *him*. But there was other evidence of sincerity bound up with the interruption of its televised broadcast: She could tell that Masoud was "crying from his heart" because they stopped filming him when he broke down in tears. The interruption of the scene showed the tears to be literally unscripted and an unexpected involuntary display of overwhelming pious affect. That this occurred while Masoud was passionately reflecting on the theme of love for God and its sincere expression as embodied ethical and ritual discipline was the perfect icing on the cake.

In an influential intervention, Talal Asad contrasts the ritual disciplining of the self through prescribed

scripts marking medieval Christian piety (and some contemporary Islamic ones) to the Renaissance's secular "dramas of manipulative power" hinging on a principled distinction between public performance and private sentiment.[36] The kinds of media productions promoted by the New Preachers as conducive to pious adherence complicate this contrast in consequential ways. In *The Player's Passion*, theater historian Joseph Roach traces how Aristotelian premises of affect as habitual self-cultivation inform modern dramaturgical traditions. At the heart of dramatic acting is a paradox familiar to pious adepts: the capacity for the player's passion to seem spontaneous—and to be expressed in tears of grief, say, or the sweat of fear—is predicated on the repetitive discipline of rehearsal, on the systematic training of muscle and memory.[37] As in pious disciplines, embodied excellence in dramatic performance is the result of the knowing application of increasing skill, of rehearsed spontaneity.

But, of course, there is a crucial distinction between the player's passion and the preacher's. The most masterful actors provoke in their audience passions that they themselves do not inwardly succumb to, but only adeptly perform—their skill lies, in other words, in eliciting from spectators an assessment of spontaneity, not in its self-cultivation. This "professionalized two-facedness" in Roach's phrasing is what defines the métier of stage and screen. No matter how dazzlingly professional, however, the preacher remains for his audience in a different evaluative category than their favorite actor—staying removed from the pious passions he stirs in others through exhortation is a failing, not a good intrinsic to his practice. But the crux of the ambivalence I have been charting is that the preacher's ritual performance is now taking place within a structural context, television, tightly bound with the conventions of dramatic acting, irrespective of individual intention. As we saw, it is not enough for the preacher to inwardly feel connection for that feeling to reach his viewers; the parasocial interaction demands that piety on television must be skillfully mediated through narrative, aesthetics, and filmic techniques.

Masoud was not feigning weeping in his series' most memorable scene. He was really crying, and it is the unrehearsed spontaneity of his visible affect that so affected others. But still, viewers could judge Masoud's tears sincere precisely because they were skillfully *not made* public in a way that was, in the end, itself *not* private. The negative evaluation of preacherly tears as "fake" or "acting" was not a commentary

on the professionalism of their production, then, but rather on its failure—on the failure of televised tears to sustain para-piety, the failure to surmount artificiality through artifice. What is important here is that Masoud's televised tears were not *televisual* tears or tears that called attention to the nonauthoritative context of their presence. Put differently, for New Preaching viewers, the specific ways in which the preacher's weeping occurred on television was crucial to how they assessed the aptness—or coherence—of this old ritual practice within new modes of religious publicity. And in important ways, these assessments demonstrated ambivalence about the unaffectedness of their own piety in contexts of mass mediation as much as about the preacher's piety.

One viewer, Engy, told me that initially she had doubts about the sincerity of Khaled's on-camera weeping because it was on camera. Echoing Mohammad and Nawal, she said she felt his crying "was like a film, something fake." This perception changed, however, as she developed the capacity to weep while watching Khaled's supplications:

> When I got into [his programs], I learned that *khushu'* (reverence) is a part of it and once you reach that level you will find yourself crying. It is still hard to believe that with all the cameras present, and with Amr Khaled acknowledging their presence, that he can still reach that level. But even so, I think he wants to encourage us, to make it easier for us to reach this level. And it works— many times I find myself crying when I am watching him. There is a Prophetic tradition that says that [you should] appear to cry even if you can't really during supplication. Khaled helps us move beyond the pretending stage to true weeping.

Engy strove to resolve her ambivalence about the Prophetically authorized practice of feigned weeping on television. Such an effort was unnecessary when the preacher wept outside the camera's view. But still Engy follows producers' own internal reasoning and invokes sincerity and its twinned quality of intimacy as an achievement of technology and technique, as an artifact of enskillment: Khaled is at once *so* professionally and piously competent he can be reverent *and* camera-ready. Moreover, he succeeds in moving others to godliness. The ritual innovation of televised tearful supplications succeeds in surmounting ambivalence when, as Robbins reminds us, it is deemed exemplary of cherished values—here, both pious sincerity and media professionalism.

Conclusion: The Politics of Tears

I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork during the heady days of Egypt's 2011 revolution. Many identified the televised tears of a prominent pro-democracy activist as a pivotal turning point for the early success of the uprising.[38] In this counter-revolutionary moment, however, the flood of presidential tears makes the assessment of televised tears even more fraught. Egypt's current ruler Sisi is known for his unabashed on-camera crying. In this, he participates in the emergent tradition of televised political weeping across democratic and authoritarian regimes.[39] For some analysts, the growing acceptance of tears in the political domain is related to the pervasiveness of melodrama, with its constitutive categories of victimhood and villainy, as a late twentieth-century genre.[40] But as with pious weeping, the mass mediation of political lachrymosity engenders ambivalence. Political tears are assessed as such through intent: they flow out of embodied sentiment for the state of the body politic, not out of personal anguish or predicament. Still, for Sisi's proponents, his tears are evidence of his humility, warmth, and the absence of artifice and guile. They mark him the antipolitician politician. For opponents, his tears are further evidence of the military regime's cynical manipulation of the masses through soppiness as strategic spectacle. Indeed, Sisi's tears are selective: they appear at memorials for soldiers and police but do not flow for civilian casualties of state violence. While the preacher's tears preceded the president's, their antecedence does not inoculate them against retroactive evaluation that is not always in the preacher's favor, whatever his declared or undeclared stance on the current political dispensation.[41]

Nevertheless, as we have seen, even in a less over-determined political context, television transforms the tears of favorite preachers from embodied expressions of pious desire to fraught and unsettled signs in need of further scrutiny to be efficacious. But my argument is not only that religious disciplines in novel contexts create ambivalence about otherwise valued ritual practices—tears on television also inadvertently threaten the objective of their production; they make piety as parasocial interaction less possible. Tears puncture the simulacrum of intimacy that stretches across the proscenium. On-camera feigned weeping was tottering on the edge of the *too* much. It becomes for many viewers an "unpleasant surprise"[42] that disrupts the qualities of friendly intimacy, sympathy, and sociability that are at once evidence and cause of the parasocial interaction. And it bears repeating that in this media theory, the parasocial is an intersubjective achievement of performer and spectator, even while the former bears the burden of creating an intimacy the latter can believe in. Far from making intimacy immediate and palpable, televised tears risk transforming skilled artifice into insincere artificiality.

Religious ambivalence toward televised tears is not simply about mediation then. Ambivalence surrounds a specific kind of aestheticized mediation of ritual, untethered from its authoritative contexts in a field of contested piety. The New Preachers' dazzling da'wa blurs genres of entertainment and edification. It foregrounds its artifice as a matter of course and in so doing distinguishes itself from what it argues are the repellant media aesthetics of its Salafi rival. This artifice is designed to make viewers feel connected and intimate with the preacher through media—to make possible a parasocial piety—even if it risks giving some viewers pause, as it does in feigned weeping. Tears become particularly ambivalent as indices of pious sincerity not simply when or because they are televised but when they are televised in ways that appear televisual. This is not a failure of intimacy but of its necessary artifice.

Yasmin Moll is an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan. She is completing a book on Islamic television in revolutionary Egypt.

Notes

1. See, e.g., Al-Muhaini, "Were Amr Khaled's Prayers Genuine?"

2. See Lutfi, *Dhahirit al-du'ah al-judud*; Al-Baz, *Du'ah fil manfa*.

3. *Ambivalence* is a key word in Samuli Schielke's influential interventions on the complex gaps between the declared ideals of Islamic Revivalism and ordinary Muslims' actual practice in Egypt; see, e.g., Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments." While some of his critics posit this analytical focus on ambivalence as indicative of "tacit attachment to a set of secular-liberal sensibilities" (Fadil and Fernando, "Rediscovering the 'Everyday' Muslim," 61), in this essay I ethnographically approach ambivalence as a register of normative religious critique of religious norms that often works through a simultaneity of evaluative distance and devoted adherence.

4. It is notable that Khaled's self-defense turns on making explicit that piety and performance are mutually constitutive, not opposed.

For excellent discussions of how conservative American Protestants similarly navigate the often fraught entanglements of religion and entertainment in public evangelism, see Bielo, *Ark Encounter*, and Elisha, "Proximations of Public Religion."

5. Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*, 35.

6. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 146–48.

7. Robbins, "Ritual, Value, and Example."

8. Keane, *Christian Moderns*; Engelke, *Problem of Presence*; Meyer, "Mediation and Immediacy"; Eisenlohr, "Technologies of the Spirit."

9. I use pseudonyms for most of the producers and all of the viewers.

10. Creating a dazzling da'wa, *da'wa mubhira*, was one important goal at Iqraa during my fieldwork and with it came the assumption, at once tacit and explicit, that visual technologies were specifically the most powerful for cultivating individuals' pious sensibilities, affects, and practices. See, for a discussion, Moll, "Television Is Not Radio."

11. Quran 41:35.

12. For a discussion of "influential" (*mu'thir*) as an emic category in Egyptian Muslim assessments of online sermons, see Hirschkind, "Experiments in Devotion Online," 6.

13. " The jargon of show business teems with special terms for the mysterious ingredients of such rapport," the sociologists elaborate in their classic essay. "Ideally, a performer should have 'heart,' should be 'sincere'; his performance should be 'real' and 'warm.'" Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction," 220.

14. Shryock, "In the Double Remoteness of Arab Detroit."

15. By contrast, female playback singers in India bundle the sincerity of their performance with the disciplining and containment of their own affect. See Weidman, *Brought to Life by the Voice*.

16. Like most of the production team, Soha was a twenty-something graduate of Cairo University's prestigious Faculty of Media. Hiring team members representative of Hosny's audience—religiously inclined educated young urban women—was itself a strategy of forging connection and ensuring resonance.

17. Meyer, "Mediation and Immediacy."

18. Neale, "Melodrama and Tears."

19. Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, 130–31.

20. Nieuwkerk, *Performing Piety*.

21. For an extended discussion of this show, see Wise, "Words from the Heart"; for the centrality of stories of repentance in the self-narratives of Islamic female activists in Egypt, see Hafez, *Islam of Her Own*. These narratives are similar in their before/after structure to Christian testimony. See Harding, *Book of Jerry Falwell*.

22. Hirschkind, *Ethical Soundscape*.

23. The classical commentarial literature discusses weeping in a broad array of devotional contexts not limited to ritual prayer or Quranic recitation-audition, including in edifying storytelling, the performative genre most closely associated with Egypt's contemporary New Preachers. The medieval popular preachers who narrated the "stories of the prophets" (*qisas al-anbiya'*) were known for the copiousness of both their own tears and that of their audiences. These "popular" preachers were subject to an extra degree of scrutiny and more likely to be accused of hypocrisy for their public tears than were sermon-givers, some of whom were renowned precisely for being virtuosic weepers. Jones, "'He Cried and Made Others Cry'"; see also Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in Medieval Islam*; Chittick, "Weeping in Classical Sufism"; Jones, *Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World*.

24. Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual."

25. Islamic theology has long thematized ritual with differing emphases and conclusions about the relations of signifying meaning and apt performance. In a comparison of Western scholarship with Islamic juristic discourses on ritual ablution (*wudu'*), for example, Marion Katz shows how premodern Muslim scholars debated whether this prescribed ritual had "deeper" and "wider" ethico-theological significance or whether its punctilious performance was all that was called for by God. Katz, "Study of Islamic Ritual and the Meaning of Wuḍū'"; see also Denny, "Islamic Ritual." For a comprehensive critical review of the Islamic studies scholarship on ritual purity, see Gauvain, "Ritual Rewards."

26. The Quran identifies "the hypocrites" (*al-munafiqin*) as such through a range of practices and dispositions, most paradigmatically as those who "say with their mouths what is not in their hearts" (3:167). Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 178–83.

27. For how this plays out comparatively in Indonesian Islamic preaching, see for example Hoesterey, "Sincerity and Scandal"; Husein, "Revival of Riya.'"

28. Larkin, "Techniques of Inattention."

29. Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual."

30. Jones, "He Cried and Made Others Cry," 104.

31. The difference between Protestant and Islamic conceptions of sincerity lies less in a contrast between spontaneity and effortful production and more in what impels such production. Webb Keane argues that the Protestant conception of sincere speech as that which is "compelled by nothing that might lie outside the speaker" (Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 214) undergirds modern secular attachments to freedom as the absence of social coercion and external compulsion. A different norm of sincerity is at work within the Egyptian piety movement where, as Saba Mahmood has shown, sincere effort is defined by a motivation to align the self with God's revealed injunctions. At the same time, Keane shows how for Indonesian converts to Protestantism putting personal effort into aligning their external expression with their interior states is not antithetical to sincerity, but one of its preconditions. In both of these oft-contrasted religious traditions, then, sincerity and effort are normatively linked.

32. Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, 15–53.

33. Starrett, "Hexis of Interpretation," 963.

34. Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*, 68.

35. Compare this to the evaluation of one of Mahmood's informants that "the path to piety is very difficult" and requires vigilance against "getting lost in the attractions of the world," in "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual," 842. The New Preachers locate such claims within what they see as an incorrect Salafi theological sensibility.

36. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 68.

37. Roach, *Player's Passion*.

38. Sorkin, "Don't Cry Wael."

39. See, e.g., Dixon *Weeping Britannia*; and Aslan, "Public Tears."

40. Metelman and Loren, *Melodrama after the Tears*.

41. Under the current regime, as in the Mubarak era, the Egyptian state evinces a tactical attitude toward the Islamic television sector's various orientations, alternating between repudiation and accommodation. At the start of my fieldwork in 2010, there were ninety-six religious channels (Islamic and Christian) broadcasting in Egypt from four satellite operators, eighteen of which were transmitting on semi-government-owned Nilesat. The number of channels on Nilesat that year was 539. The immediate aftermath of the 2011 revolution saw even more private satellite television channels established, with a wide range of interests and missions. The reentrenchment of authoritarianism following the 2013 coup has extended into the private media sector through acquisitions by the military's security apparatus.

42. Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction," 217.

References

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Al-Baz. *Du'ah fil manfa: Qissat 'Amr Khalid wal-du'ah al-judud fi Misr.* Cairo: Al Faris Publishing, 2004.

Al-Muhaini, Mamdouh. "Were Amr Khaled's Prayers Genuine?" *Al Arabiya English*, September 7, 2017. english.alarabiya.net/views/news/middle-east/2017/09/07/Were-Amr-Khaled-s-prayers-genuine-.

Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Aslan, Senem. "Public Tears: Populism and the Politics of Emotion in AKP'S Turkey." First view, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2020): 1–17. doi:10.1017/S0020743820000859.

Berkey, Jonathan. *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.

Bielo, James. *Ark Encounter: The Making of a Creationist Theme Park.* New York: New York University Press, 2015.

Chittick, William. "Weeping in Classical Sufism." In *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, edited by Kimberley Patton and John Hawley, 123–44. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Denny, Frederick. "Islamic Ritual: Perspectives and Theories." In *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, edited by Richard C. Martin, 63–77. Oxford: Oneworld Press, 2001.

Dixon, Thomas. *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Eisenlohr, Patrick. "Technologies of the Spirit: Devotional Islam, Sound Reproduction, and the Dialectics of Mediation and Immediacy in Mauritius." *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 3 (2009): 273–96.

Elisha, Omri. "Proximations of Public Religion: Worship, Spiritual Warfare, and the Ritualization of Christian Dance." *American Anthropologist* 119, no. 1 (2017): 73–85.

Engelke, Matthew. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Fadil, Nadia, and Mayanthi Fernando. "Rediscovering the 'Everyday' Muslim: Notes on an Anthropological Divide." *HAU* 5, no. 2 (2015): 59–88.

Gauvain, Richard. "Ritual Rewards: A Consideration of Three Recent Approaches to Sunni Purity Law." *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 3 (2005): 333–93.

Hafez, Sherine. *An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and Secularism in Women's Islamic Movements.* New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Harding, Susan. *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Hirschkind, Charles. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Hirschkind, Charles. "Experiments in Devotion Online: The YouTube Khutba." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 5–21.

Hoesterey, James. "Sincerity and Scandal: The Cultural Politics of 'Fake Piety' in Indonesia." In "Piety, Celebrity, Sociality: A Forum on Islam and Social Media in Southeast Asia," edited by Martin Slama and Carla Jones. *American Ethnologist* website, November 8, 2017. americanethnologist.org/features/collections/piety-celebrity-sociality/sincerity-and-scandal.

Horton, Donald, and R. Richard Wohl. "Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance." *Psychiatry* 19 (1956): 215–29.

Husein, Fatimah. "The Revival of Riya': Displaying Muslim Piety Online in Indonesia" In "Piety, Celebrity, Sociality: A Forum on Islam and Social Media in Southeast Asia," edited by Martin Slama and Carla Jones. *American Ethnologist* website, November 8, 2017. americanethnologist.org/features/collections/piety-celebrity-sociality/the-revival-of-riya.

Izutsu, Toshihko. *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Jones, Linda. "'He Cried and He Made Others Cry': Crying as a Sign of Pietistic Authenticity or Deception in Islamic Preaching." In *Crying in the Middle Ages*, edited by Elina Gertsman, 103–35. London: Routledge, 2012.

Jones, Linda. *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Katz, Marion. *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Katz, Marion. "The Study of Islamic Ritual and the Meaning of Wuḍū'." *Der Islam* 82, no. 1 (2005): 106–45.

Keane, Webb. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Larkin, Brian. "Ahmed Deedat and the Forms of Islamic Evangelism." *Social Text* 26, no. 3 (2008): 101–21.

Larkin, Brian. "Techniques of Inattention: The Mediality of Loudspeakers in Nigeria." *Anthropological Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2014): 989–1015.

Lutfi, Wa'il. *Dhahirit al-du'ah al-judud: taḥlil ijtima'i: Al-da'wah, al-tharwah, al-shuhrah.* Cairo: Al-'Ayn Publishing, 2005.

Mahmood, Saba. "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of *Salat*." *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001): 827–53.

Mahmood, Saba. *The Politics of Piety.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Metelman, Jorg, and Scott Loren, eds. *Melodrama after the Tears: New Perspectives on the Politics of Victimhood.* Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2016.

Meyer, Birgit. "Mediation and Immediacy: Sensational Forms, Semiotic Ideologies, and the Question of the Medium." In *Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*, edited by Janice Boddy and Michael Lambek, 309–26. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2013.

Moll, Yasmin. "Television Is Not Radio: Theologies of Mediation in the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2018): 233–65.

Neale, Steve. "Melodrama and Tears." *Screen* 27, no. 6 (1986): 6–23.

Nieuwkerk, Karin van. *Performing Piety: Singers and Actors in Egypt's Islamic Revival*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.

Roach, Joseph. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986.

Robbins, Joel. "Ritual, Value, and Example: On the Perfection of Cultural Representations." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21, no. S1 (2015): 18–29.

Schielke, Samuli. "Ambivalent Commitments: Troubles of Morality, Religiosity, and Aspiration among Young Egyptians." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39 (2009): 158–85.

Shryock, Andrew. "In the Double Remoteness of Arab Detroit: Reflections on Ethnography, Culture Work, and the Intimate Disciplines of Americanization." In *Off Stage/On Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture*, edited by Andrew Shryock, 279–314. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Sorkin, Amy Davidson. "Don't Cry Wael." *New Yorker*, February 8, 2011.

Starrett, Gregory. "The Hexis of Interpretation: Islam and the Body in the Egyptian Popular School." *American Ethnologist* 22, no. 4 (1995): 953–69.

Weidman, Amanda. *Brought to Life by the Voice: Playback Singing and Cultural Politics in South India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021.

Wise, Lindsey. "Words from the Heart: New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt." Master's thesis, Oxford University, 2003.