

LIVESTREAMING ISLAMIC ARTS: DIGITIZATION AS TRANSLATION IN SHI'Ī DEPICTIONS OF KARBALA

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ABSTRACT: At the Battle of Karbala (680 CE), the Umayyad Caliph ordered the deaths of the Prophet's descendants who Shi'ī Muslims believe should inherit leadership of Islam. This article explores the digitization of their commemoration, which has always been transmedial. It analyses livestreams of commemorative recitation to consider incorporation of digital technologies into commemorative arts as embodied translation through which symbolic materiality allows a cultural memory of Karbala to resonate with Shi'ās. It argues, following McLuhan (1964), that technologies are 'ways of translating' the significance of compresent traditions. This article contravenes McLuhan, however, insofar as he finds the electric to 'exceed ourselves' by translating 'our entire lives into the spiritual form of information'. In contrast, this article stresses intimacy and materiality, in which vein it demonstrates that affordances exist in relation to their environment and cultural contingency. Given the prevalence of contrary claims, it highlights the enduring value of ontological pluralism.

KEYWORDS: Battle of Karbala, COVID-19 Pandemic, Cultural Memory, Digital Art, Digital Religion, Experiential Translation, Individuation, Islamic Art, Shi'ī Islam, Transmediality.

1. Introduction

Out of the martyrdom of those of the *ahl al-bayt* ('family of the house' of the Prophet Muḥammad)¹ and their companions who were killed at the Battle of Karbala (61 AH/680 CE), which took place in a part of the Umayyad Caliphate since incorporated into Iraq, emerged an efflorescence of commemorative arts:² chants, dances, immersive artificial intelligence-generated experiences, paintings, poems, stories, talent contests, theatrical performances, videos, and more.³ These commemorations are embedded in 'the *imām* principle of divinely ordained religious leadership vested in [Imam] 'Alī [bin Abī Ṭālib (c. 23 BH-40 AH/600-661 CE. Henceforth: 'Alī)], fourth caliph and son-in-law of the Prophet' who Shi'ās believe should have inherited leadership of the Ummah (global Muslim community) instead of the first caliph, 'Abū Bakr 'Abdullah 'ibn Uthmān (50 BH-13 AH/573-634 CE) (Qureshi, 1981, p. 43). The interrelatedness of these commemorations surfaces in the *majālis* ('gatherings', sing. *majlis*) of the Imam Husain Islamic Centre (IHIC) in Earlwood, Australia. Its meetings comprise readings of the Holy Qur'an, *khiṭābat* ('oratory', a lecture or sermon), and recitations of poems recalling the Karbala narrative.

IHIC has provided the 'educational, welfare, and religious needs' of local Shi'ās since 1997 but began livestreaming *majālis* in 2009 on Facebook (*Our Objectives*). When the COVID-19 pandemic precluded attendance at *ḥusayniyāt* (spaces dedicated to

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¹ Not all *majālis* mourn the Martyrs of Karbala, but this article is concerned with those that do.

² 'Arts' here is a term meant to convey the 'transmediality' of the commemorations (see Konzack, 2018) and not their 'aesthetics', whether understood as 'the quest for beauty' (Stokes, 2016, p.41) or as a more 'semiotically oriented aesthetic theory' (Innis, 1985, p. ix).

³ Transliterations convey Arabic unless otherwise stated.

commemorating the Martyrs of Karbala. Sing.: *ḥusayniyya*), so grew their popularity. Livestreams were not IHIC's first encounter with digitality. Photographs show microphones and speakers amplifying elegists' recitations alongside projected orations (Figure 1). This timeline reveals an important point regarding IHIC's decision to livestream its ceremonies: this was not a decision to digitize its poetic recitation ceremonies, but to expand and enhance access to the already-digital.



Figure 1. Microphones and speakers amplifying elegists' recitations alongside projected orations (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

In this article, I develop the primary argument that livestreaming what was once a non-livestreamed practice is not a process of digitization, but of translation. This process is attached to chronology insofar as it belongs to a tradition rooted in seventh century Karbala when the Shi'i leader of the time and 'Ali's son, Imam Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn (4-61 AH/626-680 CE. Henceforth: Ḥusayn), was killed. However, commemorations of Ḥusayn have been transmedial since his death. It is therefore unproductive to ask how these commemorations traverse media because the question does not apply.⁴ I ask instead how they recalibrate to new technological affordances. Like DeNora, I 'borrow the concept of affordance from perceptual psychology', as developed by Gibson, 'where it refers to "what things furnish"'; their 'potential as an organizing medium, as something that helps to structure such things as styles of consciousness... or modes of embodiment' (in Born, 2005, p. 13, emphasis in original). I hereby formulate the secondary argument that there is little

⁴ Conceptualizing transmediality is therefore equally redundant, but Konzack's chapter points out that, 'if we choose to perceive mediality as the materiality of media, then transmediality becomes a discussion of what happens when a... product is adapted to another... platform, and how this content becomes changed by the [material affordances of the new] medi[um]' (2018).

phenomenologically distinct about digitality in the context of commemorating the Martyrs of Karbala.⁵ Exaggerating digitality’s particularity heralds idealist conclusions that deny a pillar of Shi’i Islam: ‘Shi’i Muslims do not just “believe” in the imams from a distance but... sense them in ways that challenge modernist sensory modes’ (Williamson Fa, 2022, p. 627).⁶ Thus, if the *ahl al-bayt* are not ‘virtual’, ‘illusory’, or ‘simulated’, nor are their digitally mediated interlocutors (Born 2005, p. 26, p. 29).⁷ As Ruffle observes:

The [Shi’i] religious sensorium [is] a symbolically rich socio-religious space where ritual practitioners engage with material objects and the body to produce sense-inflicted cultural memory of Karbala, the Imams and the *ahl-e bayt*” (Urdu form of *ahl al-bayt*, 2021b, p. 282).

Here, Ruffle describes how something ‘explicitly material is “stored away in symbolic forms that... may be transferred from one generation to another”’ (in 2021b, p. 271. See also Schubel, 1991). Therefore, I posit the final tertiary argument that incorporating digital technologies into pre-digital practices, whether through digital amplification or television, is not so substantial a qualitative difference to be worth expressing as digitization. Rather, the lessons imparted by the Martyrs of Karbala are transferred from one ‘milieu’ of symbolic forms to another (Simondon, [2005] 2020, pp. 15-16). They are *translated*, because ‘terms of reference’ within each milieu culminate in a ‘resonant and spiritually meaningful’ language (Ruffle, 2021a, p. 3. See also Eisenlohr, 2022). Readers should consider Simondon’s metaphor of tropism in his explanation of a theory of individuation when reviewing my attempt to portray how the semiotics of its case study’s translation naturally recalibrates to the affordances of digitality in such a way as resembles how plants orient themselves to their natural environment, negotiating minimum resistance and maximum reward. Respectively, the natural environment and hardware-facilitating digital affordances constitutes ‘the framework in which the genesis unfurls’ (Simondon, [2005] 2020, pp. 15-16).

2. The Digital Milieu

In Shi’i mourning processions in Mumbai, India, Eisenlohr observes an intercorporeally produced claim to space—produced *between bodies*—that he calls ‘atmospheric citizenship’. In this observation, sounds proceed from ‘persons, objects, or their constellation in events’ and act upon other agents in this ‘urban atmosphere’ who respond by chanting, crying, beating their chests, and hitting drums (2021, p. 371). Yet the *majlis*

⁵ I mobilize phenomenology to focus on the materiality of experience, encompassing not only affect, but ‘distinct, material entities that bodies... intermingle with’ (Eisenlohr, 2021, p. 371).

⁶ Idealism is meant here in the Platonic sense whereby physical Forms merely imitate their non-physical essence. Both subjective and objective idealisms which have emerged from Plato’s theory of Forms submit somehow that the physical character of a Form—its objective materiality—is either inaccessible or not fully accessible to the subjective faculties of human perception. Ibn Sīnā’s thought experiment, *yahwā in an-nafs* (usually titled ‘the flying man’ in English), exemplifies a Muslim viewpoint in which limited or subjective sensory input does not preclude the materiality of the sensed thing.

⁷ Born elsewhere recognizes digitality’s ‘material characteristics’ (2022, p. 11).

comprising the corpora constituting the urban atmosphere is established through 'emotional texture' (Wolf, 2000, p. 84), which Binder describes as follows:

The production of grief for the martyrs pivots on its juxtaposition with pride in Abbas' battle heroics, ... pity for Ali Asghar's helplessness, ... reverence for... Fatima Kubra's spousal love, ... awe for Zaynab's courage, ... fortitude in imagining Hurr's eleventh-hour change of heart, or contrition for one's own shortcomings in light of all this (2021, p. 286).

This emotionality is 'encoded' (sensu Hall [1980] 2005) in the material forms which transfer the cultural memory of Shi'i Islam through time and space. By narrating a cultural history of the becoming-livestreamed of the *majālis* of IHIC, I demonstrate how worshippers translate the means of producing their religious sensoria from one symbolic milieu to another. In other words, Shi'as translate the events of seventh-century Iraq to a milieu more contemporaneous with their experiences. It follows that commemorations of the Martyrs of Karbala individuated within/against a digital milieu propagate 'digital atmospheres' (Sparey, in press). Digital atmospheres do not 'sustain the expectations of a spatially proximate ritual' but remain 'functionally intercorporeal'. That is, bodies come together according to 'the material preconditions of a shared activity' (Sparey, 2022, p. 284). Hence, it resonates with Campbell and Vidal's 'approach to translation which is centered on the translator-practitioner-participant's embodied experience' (2019, p. 6). Digitality is necessarily built on binary code. However, this code is not abstract, as it originates in and suits the material potentials and constraints of hardware and perceptive bodies, the former through which digital affordances are accessed and the latter within which the effects of utilizing those affordances are experienced. In this article, the digital milieu involves interlocution of human actors feeling each other through embodied expressions of, and reactions to, the emotions unfurled within it.

This observation of worshippers engaged in digital commemorations of the Martyrs of Karbala challenges post-humanist constructions of the digital subject. These constructions emphasize distance: 'a digital subject is neither a human being nor its representation but a distance between the two'. In this view, a 'vast' and 'elastic' void exists between the 'data profile' of a person ('a digital artefact') and the person whose body or relation to other bodies represents the 'starting point' of their profile's construction (Goriunova, 2019, pp. 128-129).⁸ As Goriunova perceives distance between human and datum, so Richardson (2011) perceives distance between human beings on either side of a screen.⁹ A cultural history of the becoming-livestreamed of IHIC collapses this distance, as it displays experiences of the digital milieu predicated on the intercorporeality of the Shi'i mourning *majlis* despite a lack of 'compresence' (Stallknecht,

⁸ Goriunova admits this definition reorients scholars' attention towards its 'material production' (2019, p. 129).

⁹ Contrariwise, one of Richardson's more recent articles considers 'digital intimacy' (Hardley and Richardson, 2021, p. 625).

1935, p. 324).¹⁰ Indeed, whereas “‘post-human[ism]’ emerged from... the blurring of... boundaries between man and machine’, the guiding question should not be “‘how did we become post-human,” but “‘how was the human always already historically mixed with the non-human?’” (Siegert, 2013, pp. 53,57, emphasis removed). The notion of a milieu stems from Simondon’s theory of individuation, which supposes that the individual is always becoming individual. Individuality, then, exists in relation to that external to the individual, the ensemble of which he terms the ‘milieu’.¹¹ Simondon believes it possible, however, to perceive:

[A] phase of being which supposes a pre-individual reality prior to it... such that the constituted individual transports along with it a certain associated charge of pre-individual reality that is animated by all the potentials which characterize it ([2005] 2020, pp. 3,8).

This article is a cultural history of this ‘phase-shifting’ between pre-livestreamed (‘pre-individual’) and becoming-livestreamed (‘individual’) (Simondon, [2005] 2020, p. 4); between convening as a *majlis* within IHIC and on Facebook; between ‘the affordances of the [compresent] environment’ and ‘the technological affordances of social media’. Collapsing the distance between them supports Knappett’s view that ‘affordances are relational’ (in Willems, 2021, p. 1680). For this reason, Willems points out that ‘environments and contexts shape the use of technology’, because physical environments contain the potential for every technology, else they could not be realized (Willems, 2021, p. 1680). Implicit in Latour’s (2018) renowned theory of the actor-network is the view that technologies and their affordances also impact the environments from which they are accessed (see also Simondon, [1965] 2014). Findings herein therefore pertain not to a digitized form, individuated and complete, but one generative of a further individuation/translation: the ‘post-digital’. This is not so much what comes after the digital ‘as what comes out of it, ... which inhabits the cracks in the digital dream, ... forging a new aesthetic’ (Thomas, 2004, p. 214). Though beyond the scope of this article, it is foretokened in an aside regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, digital commemorations of the Martyrs of Karbala will be translated back, illustrate the source, and provide new ‘grammar’ to subsequent generations of Shi’as (Gumpert and Cathcart, 1985, p. 31). This grammar undertakes a sensorily efficacious symbolism with which mourners resonate with the emotional and eschatological significance of killing Ḥusayn and his companions. This resonance is transferred through time and space, forging, pursuing, and protecting a cultural memory of the Battle of Karbala and ‘a sense of Pan-Shi’i solidarity’ among loyalists to the *ahl al-bayt* (Marei and Shanneik, 2021, p. 69), whose sense of belonging has been predicated on ‘oppression’ and ‘overcoming’ ever since it was attacked by the caliphate (Moghadam, 2007, p. 135, p. 140).

¹⁰ This is Stallknecht’s (1935) view of compresence, which was taken up more famously by Russell (1948). Elsewhere I write that ‘compresence is more specific than co-presence. ... In analytic philosophy, compresence implies... a specifically tangible co-existence’ (Sparey, 2022, pp. 286-287).

¹¹ A conceptual maneuver, Simondon perceives the individual and milieu as thoroughly coalescent.

3. Methodology

The central problem is the tension between idealist conceptualizations of digitality and the visceral materialism of commemorating the Martyrs of Karbala. In essence, how can something so embodied, felt, materially transferred, and sensory take place upon a platform the only physicalness of which is ostensibly 'the technical basis of simulacra' (Haraway, 1991, p. 164)? Williamson Fa used anthropology to confront a similar paradox encountered in a non-digital instance of celebrating the posthumous birthday of 'Ali. He asks, if the *ahl al-bayt* are 'immaterial more-than-human beings', how can they 'be literally present in the everyday circumstances of believers' lives'? The benefit of anthropology is that these immaterial figures can be treated 'as actors alongside humans', in which sense the conception—the hermeneutical *result*—of this relationship can be constructed in emic terms (2022, p. 627).¹² Williamson Fa therefore agrees with Ahmed's view, following El-Zain's proposal of a 'native's model of Islam', that one must 'engage closely and attentively with the natives' statements of self-conceptualization' (in Ahmed, 2016, pp. 134, 249). However, the problematic exposes the materiality of these relations in the context of Shi'i mourning. I therefore treat mourners' statements as artefactual, as the hermeneutical *means* of their relationship with the Martyrs of Karbala. Hence, I analyze, not *what* symbolism is stored away, in which case 'supernatural figures' are relegated to 'mere symbols or "social facts,"' but *how* digital forms materialize a cultural memory of the Martyrs of Karbala (Williamson Fa, 2022, p. 628). Developing Merlau-Ponty's seminal definition of intercorporeality, I investigate how symbolic artefacts allow one 'body to annex... the body of another person' in a digital milieu (1964, p. 168). Treating matter as 'performance or process' marks a certain adherence to 'a performative new materialist philosophy', but one that derives more from individuation theory and dialectical materialism than from 'a growing cross-disciplinary effort to challenge longstanding assumptions about humans and the non- or other-than-human material world' (Gamble et al., 2019, p. 111, p. 125). In truth, I am trying to reassert the humanism of digital mediation qua Simondon ([1965] 2014).

There was no interaction with worshippers and content creators during data collection. Participation was limited to sharing an experience of livestreaming. In this sense it is strictly a cultural history, albeit a recent one inclined towards material culture. The data the bulk of this article takes as the subjects of its analysis are screenshots of IHIC *majālis* taken from seven audio-visual samples chosen amidst the twenty-one livestreamed *majālis* I attended on Facebook, one from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one every day during 'āshūrā' (the first ten days of the Hijri month of Muḥarram) in 1442 AH (August 20-30, 2020 CE), and another ten during the same period in 1443 AH (August 9-19, 2021 CE). Given the quantity of data, samples will be cited upon first mention.

¹² Whereas Williamson Fa proposes a notion of the 'more-than-human' (2022, p. 627), Ali finds that her interlocutors navigate this paradox through 'processes of authentication' (2022, p. 126).

COVID-19 is not the subject of this article, but the pandemic coincided with the research process such that it became one of the principal themes used by elegists, orators, and worshippers to translate Karbala into a digital milieu. This is because, for many, their experience was one of inequality, isolation, loss, and restriction, all concomitant with the Karbala narrative. Many conciliations—e.g. livestreaming—were dependent on digitality. The flipside of this experience is a phenomenology premised on dualistic assumptions that cannot account for the technicity of Shi’i thought.¹³ It is therefore vital to highlight prominent tensions between the evidence and *a priori* universalisms philosophized in academia. By historicizing IHIC’s livestreams with a pre-COVID example of their broadcasts, ‘the fight against COVID-19... [becomes] a vivid reminder that concept “religion” does not carve human social behaviors neatly at any joint’ (Wildman et al., 2020, p. 116). Moreover, as echoes of the pains of Karbala resound in lockdown announcements and the threat of illness and death spreads closer to home, mourners appropriate COVID-19 as a new symbolic milieu, one anterior to digitality and a harbinger of the post-digital conjuncture.

4. The Materiality of Martyrdom

Funerals for the Martyrs of Karbala are ubiquitous throughout Shi’ism, especially during ‘*āshūrā*’ and ‘*arba’in*’ (the fortieth day of the Hijri calendar), as pilgrims carry ornately decorated replicas of the tombs of the martyrs and horses follow. The *ma’ātām* gesture responsive to these sights involves its own multifaceted symbolism: on the one hand, Ḥusayn’s sister, Zaynab bint ‘Alī (c. 4-63 AH/626-682 CE. Henceforth: Zaynab), reacted to news of her brother’s martyrdom by beating her chest; on the other hand, ‘lament over the tragedy of the Battle of Karbala... is a strictly gender segregated ritual’ (Halder, 2020, p. 68). For all Shi’as, mourning the Martyrs of Karbala is a journey of gradual emotional ‘intensity’ (Ruffle, 2015, p. 193). Halder writes that the climax of this intensity for women, having been relegated in many places to a ‘second position in the *imāmbārā*’ (Urdu for *ḥusayniyya*) is ‘choking with emotion’ (Halder, 2020, p. 67). If, by contrast, men’s expressions reach more ‘exhausting and demanding’ heights, it is because they are expected to emulate the bravery of Ḥusayn by proving to him that they ‘would have stood with him and shed our blood and died with him’ (Pinault, 1999, pp. 104-105). Women sharing this aspiration may negotiate their desire to exhibit bravery in the fight against oppression with constraints placed upon them, whether by social norms and the threat of violence or legal institutions (Hegland, 1998). By aspiring to the bravery of the Martyrs of Karbala, both Shi’i men and women inhabit the ‘liminality between the transcendental truth of martyrdom and the everyday functioning of that pain in the socio-political dynamic context’ (Halder, 2020, p. 70).

Casci (2002) traces how the architecture of North Indian *ḥusayniyāt* has been influenced by citadels belonging to Rajputs, clans bearing a ‘martial ethos’ (Eaton, 2019, p.

¹³ ‘Privatization,’ ‘asynchronous consumption’ (Baker et al., 2020, p. 363), ‘spiritual renewal’ (Kowalczyk et al., 2020, p. 2676), ‘collective worship services as instances of dense gatherings’ (Vermeer and Kregting, 2020, p. 3).

129). Similarly, in the Hezbollah-controlled neighborhoods of southern Beirut, Deeb notices that male commemorations 'exhibit military order' (2005, p. 244). In each instance, the Rajput warrior and the Hezbollah soldier are appropriated as a term of reference for resonating with the cultural memory of the Battle of Karbala in a removed spatio-temporal context. As soldiers assert the 'Hezbollah-dominated area[s] of southern suburbs of Beirut' (Deeb, 2005, pp. 242, 253), so do protestor-mourners in Mumbai claim 'their moral right to the city... against the background of... intercommunal violence' (Eisenlohr, 2021, p. 372). Men and women in Mumbai and Beirut both translate the events of Karbala into new symbolic milieus defined by the mobilization of their technological affordances: for example, motorbikes and camouflage in the processions of Hezbollah, drums and bloodletting in Eisenlohr's ethnography, lighting and reverberation in IHIC, and camera angles and commenting in their livestreams.

5. The Early Livestreams

Across *'āshūrā'* and *'arba'īn*, 1441 AH (September 1-10 and circa October 17, 2019 CE), IHIC broadcast two livestreams: one on the seventh day of Muḥarram (AV1: Imam Husain Islamic Centre, live broadcast, 12 September 2019) and another in advance of the fortieth day (AV2: Imam Husain Islamic Centre, live broadcast, 17 October 2019). These livestreams did not capture the full program of commemorations offered by the center nor the entirety of any one ritual. Instead, they broadcast only two *'ad'iya* ('supplications', sing. *du'ā'*), prayers recited to invoke the agency of God, such as to request help, demonstrating supplicants' submission. Whereas AV2 was recorded as part of a usual order of service, AV1 records a *madrassa* ('school', pl. *madāris*) aimed at helping the children of the *majlis* understand what transpires during evening rituals in Muḥarram and Ṣafar (the second Hijri month with which *'arba'īn* coincides). During the *madrassa* event, an orator's explanation of the Karbala narrative switched lucidly between *khiṭābat* and *nūḥa* (poems narrating the death of Ḥusayn) before his seated students (Figure 2). Afterwards, two other members of the *majlis* recited a *du'ā'* and encouraged the now standing children to practice *ma'ātām* (Figure 3).



Figure 2. (AV1: Live broadcast, 12 September 2019, 11:14) Orator explaining the Karbala narrative in a *madrasa* on the seventh day of Muḥarram (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

Its endurance as a stream that remains available to view, despite no longer being ‘live’, characterizes it as an educational resource that may be referred to when necessary. On liveness, Auslander sets out to discern ‘clear-cut ontological distinctions between live forms and mediatized ones’. However, he admits that ‘although my initial arguments may seem to rest on the assumption that there are, ultimately I find that not to be the case’. For this reason, Auslander argues that ‘liveness must be examined, not as a global, undifferentiated phenomenon, but within specific cultural and social contexts’ ([1999] 2008, pp. 3,7).



Figure 3. (AV1, 32:33) Two members of the *majlis* reciting a *du'ā'* in a *madrasa* on the seventh day of Muḥarram (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

It is more apt to ask, therefore, not to what extent two human beings on either side of a screen are contemporaneous with each other, but to what extent the *ahl al-bayt* are contemporaneous with their digital interlocutors. It is not a question of whether the streams are live, so much as how the livestreams make the *ahl al-bayt* live.

AV2 was recorded on the phone of a member of the *majlis* sitting beside the supplicant. Visuals shake without regard for *mise-en-scène* and rattle within the echo chamber of the cameraman's hands or thud as they drop the phone, and it falls to the floor. This second livestream captures the supplicant sat in the center of a large room (Figure 4). The solemnity of their recitation is encapsulated by the indistinguishable boundary between the dull hue of their hoody and the unlit IHIC interior. A figure is perceptible only because of light aimed not at them, but, first, the Holy Qur'an and,



Figure 4. (AV2: Live broadcast, 17 October 2019, 23:47) Supplicant sitting in the center of a large room on *'arba'in* (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

second, the words of their *du'ā'*. Both elegists in AV2 recite into a microphone whose speakers adopt an echo effect, which reverberates around the room and among its congregants. Some digital technologies have been utilized in the events recorded in AV2, in the maintenance of a somber spirit of mourning. The sonically sewn intercorporeality of this atmosphere becomes patent in its unmissable reverberation as the cultural memory of Karbala is not only communicated through words but embodied through sound. The 'temporal thickness' conveyed by this sound submits mourners to an instantaneous past and present of the supplicant's recitation (Simondon, [1982] 2012, p. 4). It mystifies not only temporal boundaries, but also spatial ones, the absence of light precluding distinction of one member of the *majlis* from the next, of listeners from supplicant, and of humans

from the more-than-human Martyrs of Karbala. In this way, IHIC asserts the technicity of mourning with the prominence of digital technologies. As in AV1, supplicants in AV2 may as well have explicated what, why, and how they were grieving, because this semiotic would be legible to one versed in mourning the Martyrs of Karbala. This raising of a consciousness of technological mediation collapses the distance between mourners and mourned and is an affordance of the digital means of the supplicants' recitation.

Given the powerful and worshipful role of digitality in this early livestream, the lack of care given to its recording is jarring. Those inclined towards underscoring the immateriality of digital mediation and the post-humanism of its interlocutors might understand the discrepancy in attention to detail between livestreams before and during the COVID-19 pandemic as evidence that the intercorporeality of the digital atmosphere was compromised by a dependency on livestreaming. They might contend that livestreaming when mourners could not be compresent—within the same room as the elegist, orator, or supplicant—was compensatory. It is true that, before the pandemic, livestreaming was supplementary to IHIC's rituals, whereas during the pandemic it became integral. However, advocates of such denunciations of digitality fail to recognize the unreliable foundations on which they stand: the homogenization of a category of digitality and the fetishization of a spatiotemporal boundary. The presence of the Martyrs of Karbala was facilitated prior to the pandemic by a digital atmosphere knitted together by digital amplification. Not only were the sounds of the recitation and the temporality of the *majlis* already blurred, mourners struggled to see with whom they shared the confines of an unlit room. The mediation of mourners and martyrs with a symbolically efficacious means of cultivating intercorporeality was not reliant on a shared coherent spacetime, but on the translation of the emotional and eschatological significance of the cultural memory of Karbala into the technological affordances of a symbolic milieu that resonates with the IHIC *majlis*. Wounds inflicted upon the martyrs were translated into a means of amplifying poetic recitation that rattles the very bones of its listeners; the tragic falling of the flag was translated into the solidarity that Shi'as felt acutely when their bodies become indistinguishable from their comrades'; the heavenly green of Ḥusayn's robes was translated into vivid poetic imagery, which, perceived so viscerally in a darkened room, became translocative, a 'conceptual bridge... between one event and another' (Wolf, 2014, p. 9). So McMurray writes, 'congregations and individuals mobilize Karbala through sound' in the sense that the eschatological significance of the cultural memory of Karbala is translated into sonic symbols (2021, p. 1883). Elsewhere, Wolf has shown how 'virtual pilgrimage is... central to Muharram rituals, where... the destination of... processions is called... Karbala' (2010, p. 120). By motioning geographically towards somewhere else, mourners feel Karbala wherever they stand.

6. Pandemic Pieties

On the first day of Muḥarram the following year, five months after the first person was reported to have died in Australia because of COVID-19, IHIC livestreamed a *majlis* in its

entirety (AV3: Imam Husain Islamic Centre, live broadcast, 20 August 2020). The broadcast begins with two parallel windows, one on the left affixed with a username in the bottom-left corner that reads 'IHIC' and one on the right which reads someone's name (anonymized) (Figure 5). On the left, an orator wears a hoodie and sits between a tapestry and a table. The hoodie, the tapestry, and the table are ornamented with green and red martyrological calligraphy. A row of candles is arranged evenly across the table. On the right, a sign-language interpreter sits before further calligraphy and translates the orations. In the bottom-right corner of the screen is the translucent watermark of the logo of the videoconferencing software used for their livestream.

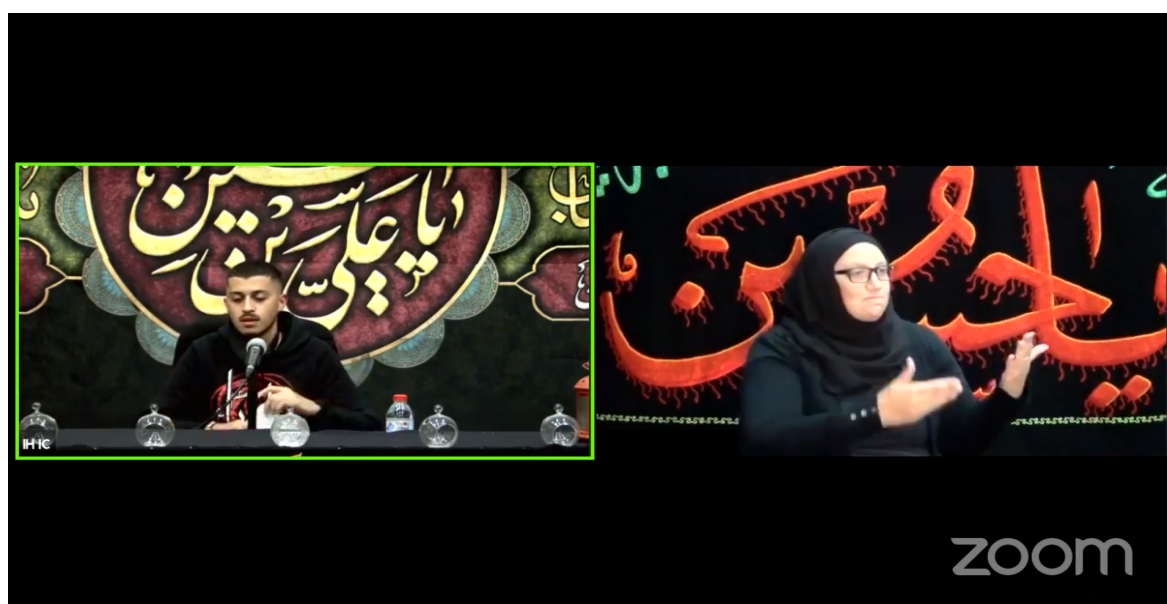


Figure 5. (AV3: Live broadcast, 20 August 2020, 2:03) Opening shots of the *majlis* (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

It is clear in the orator's welcome (Appendix 1) that the inability to gather as is customary is a point of regret. Nevertheless, the orator makes it clear that spatial proximity to other mourners or the center itself does not prevent digital interlocutors from being recognized by God as attendants. They are not the only mourners recognized by the orator as facing difficulties concerning the formation of a *majlis*: those attending in-person must maintain distance from one another and avoid being noisy. Although I advocate a conception of intercorporeality that defies spatial proximity, the orator's decision to bring it to the attention of mourners possibly inhibits the claim to space that characterizes Eisenlohr's analysis of an urban atmosphere. This distance is signaled visually by spots on the floor and the wearing of masks. Not only is physical contact reduced, but any trace of it is removed with sanitizer. The orator's opening remarks are preceded by a reading of the Qur'an, *khiṭābat*, and a poetic recitation. There is much to say about each of these moments, but I will focus on the recitation. Between *khiṭābat* and poetry, digitally mediated mourners are presented with an obscure view of the unlit interior of the *ḥusayniyya* building (Figure 6) and the elegist (Figure 7). As in AV2, the view of mourners

digitally and otherwise in the presence of the elegist is directed towards a dimly lit figure. All is black except for the words of the recitation. A by-product of this illumination is that their chest is visible whereas their face blends into the background. The only clear visual is a hand beating into the chest; the rest is darkness. Mourners are not touching one another. In fact, they are expressly forbidden from doing so. As in AV2, the elegist is digitally amplified, sounds landing upon the ear of all listeners being digitally mediated. The reverberation and volume of this amplification drowns out all other noises.

Both in-person and digitally mediated mourners may as well have been devoid of a sensation of externality were it not for the intercorporeally efficacious symbolic milieu in which these broadcasts and their sensations unfold. As with AV2, listeners embody the emotional and eschatological gravitas of a cultural memory of Karbala. Mourners also hear ‘glitches’ in the elegist’s recitation as they perform *ma’ātām* and struggle to prevent themselves from crying. Mourners may not hear each other directly, but the narratives of solidarity prevalent in the poetry are felt viscerally as mourners’ *ma’ātim* and tearful responses accord with the intermittent falters in the recitation of the elegist. A glitch is here an ‘error’ intended to correspond to the grave ethical mistakenness of attacking the *ahl al-bayt*. Such a ‘creative misuse of technology’ is afforded by the environment in which it occurs and is not limited to ‘digital detritus’, but encompasses emotional texture (Thomas, 2004, p. 214). In the first Muḥarram of the pandemic, presence is fostered through corresponding gestures that are indicated sonically. These sonic gestures are contextualized by a preface, the orator’s opening remarks, which emphasizes and grieves the simultaneous co-presence and absence of digitally mediated mourners. The hardware visible in Figure 1 and AV1, as well as the view of the *majlis* present within the interior of IHIC, demonstrates how digitally mediated mourners are likely indexed to the spatially compresent *majlis* (Figure 6). When mourners commemorate the Martyrs of Karbala while observing the space between attendants or the camera if within the IHIC building, they may as well be incensed by the unoccupied saddle of *dhū al-janāḥ* (Ḥusayn’s horse, often portrayed as bloodied and riderless).



Figure 6. (AV3: Live broadcast, 20 August 2020, 54:34) View of the *husayniyya* from the perspective of the mourners. (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)



Figure 7. (AV3, 1:17:47) View of the elegist from the perspective of the mourners. (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

7. Natively Digital Affordances

A year later, no in-person attendees are permitted, and the livestreams (AV4) have become more highly produced (more reliant on postproduction editing):¹⁴ Qur’anic recitations are accompanied by translations and transliterations (Figure 8), *ziyārāt* (‘visitations’, supplications in which Shi’as greet the *ahl al-bayt*. Sing. *ziyāra*) are too (Figures 9 and 10), more of the table and tapestry between which the orator sits is visible during *khiṭābat* (Figure 11), and the angle with which the reciting elegist is recorded changes more frequently (Figure 12). Background displays now frame the recitations. During *ziyārāt*, respondents are presented with a digitally manufactured artwork, the sky red and the sun bright, carving out a silhouette of a grieving Zaynab arched over the arrow-ridden body of her brother. Behind them, their camp is aflame. Before them, soldiers with spears stare on, alert and wielding their weapons, ready to fight, but still amidst Zaynab’s grief. As mourners gaze upon this dreadful sight, they hear poetry (Appendix 2).

¹⁴ As I have explained elsewhere (e.g. Sparey, 2022; Sparey, in press), this is the result of an organization capitalizing on its significantly increased popularity, and not of a lacking sophistication of digital technologies within Shi’i art, media, and worship prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The above-given explanation of digital amplification should also evidence this point.



Figure 8. (AV4: Live broadcast, 10 August 2021, 2:31) Qur'anic recitations accompanied by translations and transliterations. (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

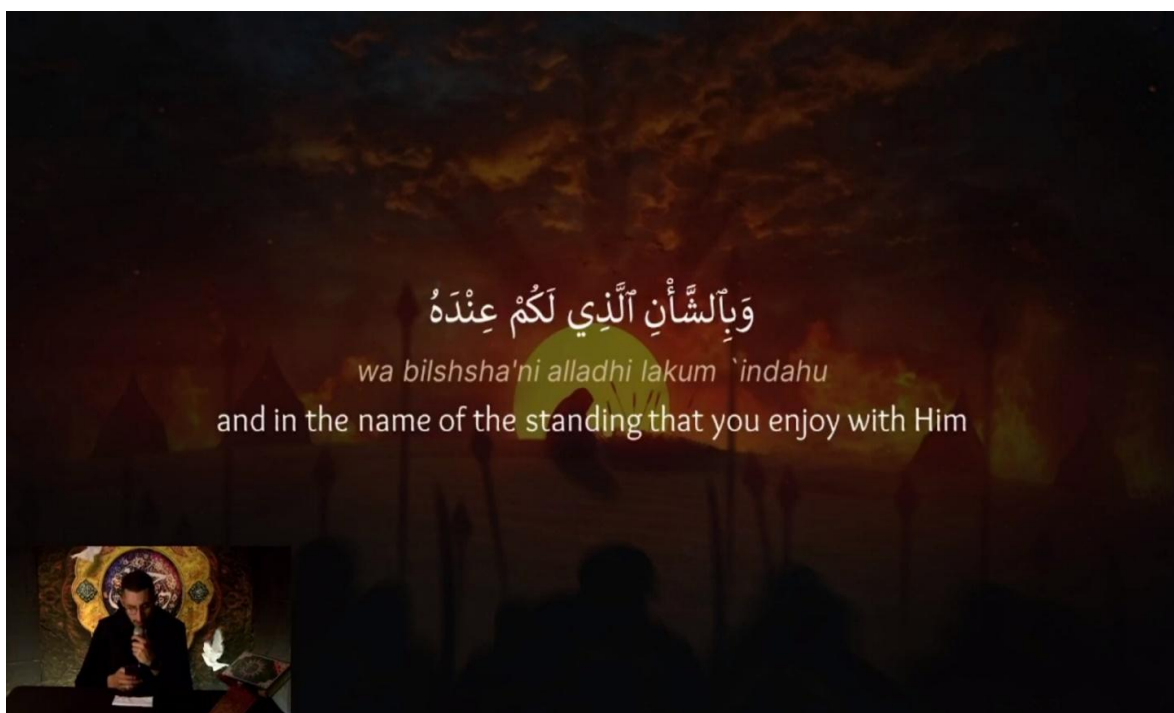


Figure 9. (AV4, 12:55) ziyārat (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)



Figure 10. (AV4, 21: 53) ziyārāt (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)



Figure 11. (AV4, 27:30) View of orator during *khīṭābat* (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)



Figure 12. (AV4, 1:53:06) View of elegist during *ma'ātam* (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

In the backdrop to Figure 9, swathes of sand separate Zaynab from the viewer and her attackers. Meanwhile, the elegist proclaims on behalf of his respondents that he, and by extension they, seek nearness to Allah, yet the cursed killers are depicted sharing the same perspective as devout worshippers, conflating their sense of space. Mourners are dared to overcome this unpleasant pairing when the elegist, as a vehicle for the piety of the whole *majlis*, beseeches Allah to give him/them the chance to avenge Ḥusayn. They can only reconcile this explicitly insufferable contradiction by entering the void depicted on the screen and help prevent the impending tribulations portrayed in the supplication. However, the contradiction cannot be reconciled this way in a literal sense because of the affordances of the medium, as viewers cannot pass through the screen and overtake the enemy soldiers depicted immediately before them.¹⁵ It is clear from onlookers' distress that the endeavor to approach the material reality of the Battle of Karbala is instantaneously sufficient and insufficient for commemorating its martyrs. This endeavor sits at the heart of the Shi'i logic of bereavement whereby mourners, in their attempt to comprehend the felt presence of a known absence, explore ways of compensating, 'a mimetic process by which the loved one is gradually incorporated, as it were, instead of being searched in vain outside'. When the psychiatrist, Fuchs, interviews people whose relatives have recently passed away, he finds they achieve 'bodily mimesis' through the 'auratic character' of the deceased person's possessions, as if their 'presence condensed in them'. Shi'as have known this for centuries, as they attempt to love in the face of loss and observe the *imām* principle while the ordained Mahdi (the current Imam) is concealed

¹⁵ This limitation is not unique to digital hardware. See al-Hudaid's (2020) article for an analysis of Shi'i sculpture.

from humanity. They pursue, per the final line of the quoted *ziyāra* (Appendix 2), a lifetime of evoking 'embodied [cultural] memory' of Karbala through such 'familiar objects' as musical, painterly, and poetic symbols, "“continuing bonds,” which suggests that in typical grief, ... relationships with the deceased are reshaped and sustained rather than abandoned' (Fuchs, 2018, pp. 53, 57, 60). It is a lifetime of 'overcoming' (Tabar, 2002, p. 297; Moghadam, 2007, p. 135; Fattah, 2020, p. 162).

Pertinent to this analysis are comments expressing Facebook users' difficulty accessing the intersensoriality of the *majlis* (Appendix 3). To those whose experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic inculcated them with a propensity for surmounting technical difficulties through textual contributions either in the comments sections of livestreams or the chat windows of videoconferencing software, this exchange may appear routine. However, it is the very nature of commenting as an 'everyday practice' that makes it 'paradigmatic to explain the relationship between hagiographical texts (stories of saints' lives) and religious performance in the production of culturally meaningful idealized... roles', which, as has been established, allow mourners to traverse the conundrum that arises when feeling and following the presence and edicts of an absent Mahdi (Ruffle 2021a, p. 27). Zoubiada Sakr, recognizing how important it is to experience *khiṭābat* during the holy period of 'āshūrā', points out there is no sound. Sadeq Hossaini, following suit, seeks not only resolution, but discloses, in the spirit of *naẓar*, that he prays for it (Akkach, 2022). When Sakr announces that all is good the second time the sound falters and is restored, Latifa Karaki implores Allah that IHIC's livestream operators be blessed for their diligence in facilitating the *majlis*. This commentative *majlis* surfaces in all IHIC's livestreams, as in another video wherein Maissa Nasour complains 'sorry the sound is very low'. IHIC reply: 'we apologize for the inconvenience we are working to fix this asap'. After they ask 'is that better', Abdoul Dirani comments: 'sound is back thank [yo]u', their thanks shared by several other commenters. This interruption does not prevent Riyaz Virjee from interpreting the livestream as a 'beautiful presentation' (AV4).

The very existence of this livestream highlights the 'presence in absence' which pervades Shi'i semiotics (Ruffle, 2017, p. 329). That this distance manifests digitally is brought to one's attention by a window in the bottom-left of the screen in which the elegist is viewable. The eschatological contradiction mentioned above is mapped out by the juxtaposition of large painting and small elegist, of the near sound and its far source. Shi'as are pushed to mitigate this distance for which distance is already requisite and felt, to enter the desert by sonically embodying the invocation of Karbala. The elegist, like the Martyrs of Karbala, is felt but not present. This is to say that the screen and speakers are appropriated as a cause of distance as well as a solution to it. The materiality of hardware sews the expressions of various actors into an emotionally interactive and self-perpetuating unit that overwhelms them with grief and a knowingly foolhardy desperation to overcome it, in which sense the digital facilitates what spatial compresence otherwise would: the *majlis*. That this cultivation of a *majlis* is a unique affordance of digitality, is born of the medium and therefore 'natively digital' (Rogers, 2013, p. 13), is highlighted by

the change in backdrop to aerial footage of Karbala (Figure 10). Nevertheless, it is because of the illumination of the body-screen relation that worshippers form a bodily connection with each other and therefore with the *ahl al-bayt*. They may not pass through the screen, but they may feel the bodies of the martyrs and mourners who it 'possesses' and 'manifests' (Ruffle, 2021b, p. 278).

Figures 11 and 12 exhibit a careful consideration of the placement of the recording camera, but for different reasons. In Figure 11, the camera is placed where in-person attendants would ordinarily sit, heightening a sense of being there in spatial compresence. This may well appear compensatory, but to suggest that it is experienced that way disregards the agency of mourners who are aware they are being livestreamed to, having accessed it on a social media platform. Nevertheless, there is a sense they may be able to perceive their intercorporeality with other digitally mediated members of the *majlis* as in the analysis of Figure 7. In Figure 12, constantly changing camera angles keep viewers engaged in the recitation, in a way impossible without digital software, because it is an affordance of transposition, a postproduction effect. The visibility of such tropes as lanterns, calligraphy, black thobes, and the elegist's tears ensures that the result of this engagement is a grief premised on empathy with others and a sense of belonging to the same *majlis*. The affordances of the Facebook interface bring this belonging into sharp relief, as the video is accompanied by fifty reactions and forty-four comments. The reactions extend to liking, crying, loving, and caring indicated by various emoticons such as a thumbs up and heart. These reactions are mere clicks away from revealing the names of their providers. In the attached comment section, further emoticons reside, the most popular depicting praying hands. The efficacy of this translation of the cultural memory of Karbala to the technological affordances of Facebook as an example of the digital milieu is not limited to the provocation of appropriate emotions of bereavement or the desire to achieve closeness with the *ahl al-bayt*. It bears a translocative potential too, as footage of rituals forming the pilgrimage to Karbala are shared during the recitations (Figure 13) and branding signifies the *majlis'* earnest aspiration to convene in communion with one another and in unified opposition to their oppressors (Figure 14).

On branding, Pinault writes that 'impressive public performances of *matam* and *nauhas* increase... [the] prestige' of the guilds responsible for organizing them; 'from this flow invitations to *majālis*, an accrual in membership, and further membership dues and contributions' (1992, p. 126). Readers should not interpret this cynically, as 'a debased and corrupted pretense at piety for capitalistic ends' or 'tribalism'.¹⁶ Rather, as in Lunn and Byl's article (2017, p. 406), societies, guilds, *ḥusayniyāt* such as IHIC, or production companies act upon the principle of *nazar*, 'a unique Arabic-Islamic term/concept that conveys at once "seeing" and "reflecting"', being seen by God commemorating the

¹⁶ This is not meant to dismiss the very real 'role in the economy of mass pilgrimage', but to present an understanding of the intersection of capitalism and Commemorations of Karbala such as through branding that derives from an emic Shi'i epistemology (Goodman, 2007, p.59). Following Lunn and Byl (2017), I will elsewhere explore this intersection in more depth (Sparey, in press).

Martyrs of Karbala and reflecting the divinity they believe he attributed to their lineage (Akkach, 2022, ix). IHIC in marking their pious art-offerings (visual arts, poetic recitations, etc.) as theirs give the awakened proselytized a tangible term of reference in the form of a *husayniyya* that they can join digitally or otherwise. In this sense, they pursue the mission of the *ahl al-bayt* by instantaneously honoring the Martyrs of Karbala and expanding the *majlis* of *ash-shi'at*.



Figure 13. (AV6: Live broadcast, 11 August 2021, 4:34) Footage of rituals forming the pilgrimage to Karbala shared during the recitations (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)



Figure 14. (AV7: Live broadcast, 21 August 2021, 0:39) Branding (Source: Imam Husain Islamic Centre)

8. Post-Digital Conclusions

Proving that a 'new translation always also affects the source text', highly produced livestreams of IHIC *majālis* continue in the years ahead, even as the threat of COVID-19 wanes (Campbell and Vidal, 2019, p. 7; See also Reynolds, 2013). In this post-digital milieu, the technological affordances of Facebook, including the *majlis*' outreach to a global community of mourners, brings the in-person *majlis* into concert with a digital *majlis*. The compresence of IHIC post-lockdown is infiltrated with natively digital developments, including digitally manufactured artworks and the powerful sense of togetherness that now radiates from the tools of their production. A cultural history of the digitization of commemorating the Martyrs of Karbala during the COVID-19 pandemic is, in this way, a reminder to scholars that digitality and its experiences cannot be conceived of as lacking materiality or destroying human agency and subjectivity. It contrastingly forms the basis of technologies like any other, which humans have appropriated for millennia in the process of becoming human.

Given the materially unclear boundaries between pre-digital, digital, and post-digital, and considering the evident agency of mourners in these milieus, it is more accurate to conceptualize livestreaming as a 'way of translating' one phenomenon to a realm of technological affordances generative of a new symbolic milieu which 'never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them'. The findings of this article contravene McLuhan, however, insofar as he differentiates between 'previous technologies [that] were partial and fragmentary and the electric, [which] is total and inclusive', such that human beings 'exceed ourselves' by translating 'our entire lives into the spiritual form of information' (McLuhan, [1964] 1994, pp. 56-61, p. 158). Digitization and its affordances should be thought of more as a 'transformation' *to*, rather than *of*, consciousness in which relations among humans and between them and their natural environment are revealed as something already 'active and effective' if once 'invisible, illegible, [or] inaudible' (Derrida, [1996] 2002, p. 7). The imposition of the human onto the non-human might be thought of in terms of the Anthropocene, but not a Heideggerian epoch of technicity that in 'enframing' the affordances of the natural world, and therefore the 'exploitation' (Lemmens, 2020, p. 3) and 'distortion of human nature', beckons the end of 'real' inter-human relations and a phenomenological distance from nature (Dreyfus and Spinoza, 2006, p. 268). Evident in the livestreamed *majālis* of IHIC is a viscerally comprehended and intercorporeally constructed community that seeks to observe the *imām* principle by translating the cultural memory of the Battle of Karbala into the semiotic affordances of a digital milieu. This essay concludes, then, as Hui also does, that 'technologies in different cultures are affected by the cosmological understandings of these cultures and have autonomy only within a certain cosmological setting' despite being 'anthropologically universal'. This is a virtue of the individuation of their materiality to the technological affordances of new symbolic milieus and what Hui would prefer to consider: 'cosmotechnics' (2016, p. 19).

Appendix 1

“as-salāmu ‘alaykum [(‘peace be upon you’)] all, my condolences unto you all, and to Imam *sāhib al-zaman* [(‘the master of time’, in reference to Imam al-Mahdi, the unknown leader of Muslims in the present, according to the Twelver branch of Shi’i eschatology)], on entering the month of Muḥarram, the month of the tragedy of *‘āshūrā’*. It is very sad to say that due to COVID-19 there is such a little amount of people actually attending the center this evening. I do know that if it were not for these restrictions, this center and every other center around the world would be flocking with attendees in mourning for Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn. For those watching from home, Allah *subḥānallah wa-ta‘ālā* [(‘praise and exaltations be upon him’)] knows our intentions and knows, if you were able to come, you would... be in attendance, so, *‘in shā’ allāh* [(‘if God wills’)], you will still be written as an attendee for the majālis of Imam Ḥusayn *‘alayhi as-salām* [(‘peace be upon him’)]. For those in attendance at the center, I ask you all to please comply with some of these housekeeping rules: we ask that all your cars are parked legally and not obstructing any of our neighbors’ driveways, your phones are either off or on silent so that they may not disturb our speakers, after the program you do not loiter around and keep the noise to a minimum in order to not disturb our neighbors, and we kindly ask you comply with our COVID safety precaution rules, always keeping your mask, always maintaining a one-point-five social distancing at all times, sanitizing your hands as frequently as possible, and keep physical contact to the bare minimum, and also we have marked spots on the floor, if you can all just sit on the marked spots, and, if you were here for the earlier evening, and you are confirmed for the main program now, we ask that you register [and] let the front desk when you enter know, and we kindly ask you to comply with all instructions given by our volunteers. We thank you all for your cooperation in these difficult times. It is hard on us just as it is hard on you. May Allah *subḥānallah wa-ta‘ālā* bless you all for your efforts *‘in shā’ allāh*. I now ask you to recite three loud *ṣalawāt* [(‘salutation’. Sing. *ṣalā*)] as I ask Sayyid Muhammad to come up and bless this evening with a few verses from the Holy Qur’an” (AV3, 0:00-1:58).

Appendix 2

fa-la‘ana allahu ‘ummataan ‘assasat ‘asāsa alzzulmi wa-al-jawri ‘alaykum ahl al-bayt wa-la‘ana allahu ‘ummataan dafa‘atkum ‘an maqāmikum wa-‘azālatkum ‘an marātibikum ‘allatī rattabikum allahu fihā wa-la‘ana allahu ‘ummataan qatalatkum wa-la‘ana allahu al-mumahhidīna lahum bi-al-ttamkīni min qitālikum. bari‘tu ‘ilā allahi wa-‘ilaykum minhum... wa-la‘ana allahu ‘ummataan ‘asrajat wa-al-jamat wa-tanaqqabat li-qitālika bi‘abī ‘anta wa-‘ummī. laqad ‘azuma muṣābī bika fa-‘asāl allaha alladhī ‘akrama maqāmaka wa-‘akramanī bika ‘an yarzuqanī ṭalaba tha‘rika. ... ‘innī ‘ataqarrabu ‘ilā allahi wa-‘ilā rasūlihi wa-‘ilā ‘amīri al-mūminīn wa-‘ilā fātima wa-‘ilā bi-muwālātikum wa-muwālāti wa-liyyikum. ... al-lahumma aj‘al maḥyāyi maḥyā muḥammadin wa-‘ālī muḥammadin (“may Allah curse the people who laid the basis of persecution and wrongdoing against you, O members of the household. May Allah curse the people who drove you away from your position and isolated you from your ranks that Allah has put you in. May Allah curse the people who slew you. May Allah curse those who paved the way for them to do so and who made it possible for them to fight against you. I repudiate them in the presence of Allah and You. ... May Allah also curse the people who saddled up, gave reins to their horses and masked their faces in preparation for fighting against you. May my father and mother be ransoms for you. Extremely insufferable is my commiserations with you, [Ḥusayn], so I beseech Allah Who has honored your position and honored me because of you, to endue me with the chance to avenge you. ... I do seek nearness to Allah, to His Messenger, to the Commander of the Faithful, to Fatimah, to al-Ḥasan... by means of declaring loyalty to you and to your loyalists. ... O, Allah, please make me live my lifetime in the same way as Muhammad and Muhammad’s household lived”) (AV5, 13:56-19:22).

This is IHIC’s translation. An alternative (my rewriting) might read thus: “May Allah curse the people who laid the foundations of injustice and oppression upon you, the *ahl al-bayt*, and may Allah curse the people who drove you from your position and removed you from the ranks in which

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Allah has arranged you and may Allah curse the people who killed you and may Allah curse those who paved the way for them to be able to fight you. I am acquitted before God, and you are among them... and may Allah curse the people who saddled and bridled to fight against you. May my father and mother be yours. I have the pinnacle of my suffering with you, so I ask God who honored your position and honored me with you, to bless my request for your vengeance. ... I seek nearness to Allah and his messenger and to the prince of the faithful and to Fāṭima and to Ḥasan, with your loyalty and [my] loyalty to you and your loyalists. ... O, Allah, make my life the life of Muḥammad and [that of] the family of Muḥammad.”

Appendix 3

Zoubiada Sakr (26:16): “No sound.”

Sadeq Hossaini (26:55): Folded hands emoji.

Marwa Hijazi (28:43): “Sound is clear.”

Rima Farhat (29:32): “No sound.”

Zoubiada Sakr (30:56): “All good.”

Latifa Karaki (32:03): ‘*aḏam allah ajūrکم* (“may Allah make your reward great”)
(AV5).

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