Love is Blind: A *Sovereign Intimacy* Roundtable

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Sovereign Intimacy (UC Press, 2023) is not, author Laliv Melamed warns, about political resistance against the Israeli settler-colonial regime per se. But insofar as it tracks the work of intimate familial media in the assimilation of Israelis to that regime—a regime currently waging a genocidal campaign against Palestinians—it has something essential to say about the affective underpinnings of normalized state violence.

A few of the animating arguments of *Sovereign Intimacy* go like this: Intimacy and violence are not-so-secret sharers in maintaining Israel's settler-colonial project; the Israeli state is buttressed by the private and familial grief of Israelis mourning kin whose lives were lost in military campaigns, even when that grief is sublimated into anger directed at the state itself; the circulation of private and amateur memorial videos by Israelis compels a critical reorientation toward the politics of witnessing and testimony in humanitarian discourse; dismantling Israel's sadistic regime requires an attunement to the political economies of grief and intimacy at the heart of Israel's sovereignty.

Launch events for the book— in which interlocutors framed the broader stakes and implications of these arguments—followed on the heels of *Sovereign Intimacy*'s spring 2023 publication, with a final event of 2023 held on the evening of October 6, at New York University. A day later, the book, written in the long shadow of a post-Oslo Israeli political formation, found itself in a very different present.

Sovereign Intimacy reflects the knowledge that a catastrophe has been unfolding since the founding of Israel as a Jewish nationalist state seven decades ago. Its arguments are shaped by this ongoing event whose violence has at times been brutally punctual, breathtaking in its scale, and at other times, slower, ongoing.

The violence it takes up is cut to the measure of settler grief, with its ebbs, flows, and sudden paroxysms. For many who are stricken by grief, the time to engage with the book, or this World Records roundtable, may not be the present. But for those of us who can bear to—who know that we need more and better guides on the path to dismantling Israel's brutal occupation—it is worth reading now.

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Pooja Rangan

A study of memorial videos produced by bereaved Israeli families to commemorate soldiers killed during Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestine, Laliv Melamed's *Sovereign Intimacy* is an extended meditation on love and remembrance as settler feelings, and on the media infrastructures that support them. That meditation leads to a meticulously researched critical perspective on some of the shibboleths of post-Holocaust documentary discourse. I'll restrict my response to three of these—*witness*, *care*, and *accountability*—with the hope of showing what the book might have to offer not only for documentary scholars but for many others who might have a stake in these paradigms, including human rights activists, political theorists, media archivists, prison abolitionists, and decolonial thinkers of all stripes.

Melamed's study of the testimonial function of Israeli memorial videos reasserts the often obfuscated role of state power in the politics of witnessing. For bereaved Israeli family members, making a memorial video is experienced as a therapeutic act. By paying attention to the Israeli state's role both in notifying family members of a loved one's death and in publicizing and circulating their videos, Melamed teases out how state power is both intimated and amplified through testimonial speech. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's landmark 1992 treatise on the historic trauma of the Holocaust, *Testimony*, inaugurated a trendsetting interest in the media testimonial as a humanitarian medium. In the aftermath of this book, testimony has routinely been understood as a morally sacrosanct form of documentary speech that speaks truth to sovereign power by addressing those who might sanction it. By focusing on the Israeli situation, Melamed offers a sorely needed critical account of the late twentieth-century rise of the mass-mediated testimonial, and its role in the construction of the witness as a politically potent subject capable of inflicting injury. Whereas the political potency of the witness testifying to the truth of events silenced by sovereign power—especially under conditions great personal risk—has frequently been understood in terms of the trauma and injury they have experienced, Melamed asks us to consider the injuries that the grief of the witness can be used to inflict, as well as the dangers of a listenership that confirms the necropolitics of Jewish-Israeli victimhood.

The insidious politics of injury and victimhood (insidious because its political content and impact is not immediately apparent) that adheres to the testimonial is, to my mind, closely linked to the second paradigm that Melamed displaces and reframes: the paradigm of care. Care has moved to the forefront of academic and activist discourse over the past decade and a half as part of a prevailing turn to the politics of repair, mending, and healing. From within the confines of this reparative mode, it can be difficult to notice when care takes malevolent form. Melamed pays careful attention to all the ways in which care and love are weaponized, developing an invaluable formulation: "the right to love." Intended as both an echo and inversion of Jasbir

Puar's work on debility and *the right to maim*, this formulation gives language to the mundane, everyday, intimate, familial care work—by wives, mothers, fathers, and even relationalities less stable with regard to the state (such as that of the "girlfriend," elaborated in one chapter)—that goes into the maintenance of sovereign power. Melamed also brings our attention to the quotidian rhetorical forms and idioms through which mundane acts of care circulate, including the anecdote, the story, and the message. There are connections to be explored here between Melamed's analysis of "sovereign intimacy" and its role in justifying the violent occupation of Palestine, and in the ongoing conversation among US-based critical prison scholars about carceral modes of feminism (such as white feminism, described by Kyla Schuller as an approach to feminism that works to liberate privileged women while ignoring barriers faced by women of color and poor women) that indirectly justify the further incarceration of marginalized black and brown women, queer, and trans people in the name of caring for the rights of victims of sexual violence.

Finally, I want to make note of how Melamed takes up the question of *accountability*, a term that isn't central to her analysis but which her methodology nonetheless takes very seriously. We've seen a particular vision of "accountability" circulate in the rise of "perpetrator docs" (for instance, in Rithy Panh's *S21*, 2003; or Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing*, 2012) where the documentarian "stands above" and assumes a human rights watchdog positionality in relation to mercenaries or soldiers, who are forced to confront the results of their actions in a context where the political powers that protected them from scrutiny have abandoned them, or lost their impunity. Melamed positions herself and her methodology in distinction to this trend, not above but discomfitingly entangled with it, as a way of understanding her own complicity as an Israeli citizen and former military recruit, as well as the intimate forms of linguistic, ethnonational, and institutional access that allow her to study intimacy as a settler phenomenon. What does it mean to conscientiously object after the fact? Or to tackle one's own internalization of the sovereign with the fervent desire not to reproduce it? Like the memorial, accountability also has a chronicity and a time-logic. It is belated, but nevertheless necessary; it can also be a means of not forgetting. Melamed expands a vocabulary for thinking about the accountability work of not forgetting: a vocabulary of compliance, proxies, operations, protocols, and procedures. I want to call it a bureaucratic vocabulary, because of the way it harkens back to Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in its analysis of accountability in settler-colonial violence from within a place of complicity. If for Arendt mass murder is made possible through bureaucratic banality, for Melamed it is through everyday intimacies.

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Kareem Estefan
It has been a pleasure to think with Laliv, and to read this excellent book, which examines material that repels me subjectively, but is handled with an uncommon care—both methodological and political—that makes me sit with this repulsion.

I spoke these words at a book launch for *Sovereign Intimacy* at Queen Mary University of London last June, and I offered comments noting what I take to be some of *Sovereign Intimacy*'s significant interventions: the book's historicization of the privatization of memory within Israel,

its theorization of intimacy as an affective frame that disavows the political and thereby underscores its own coloniality, its sensitivity to the anecdotal and the quotidian as registers for thinking militarized sovereignty, and its attentiveness to protocols and standards in televisual media that predate today's algorithmic networks. I also highlighted what I saw as certain echoes and points of tension that arise when one considers similar themes from the perspective of those subjugated by a settler-colonial sovereign whose citizens do not perceive themselves within the same frame as those they subjugate. In other words, I made some rather obvious observations about the incommensurability of the same terms on opposite sides of the apartheid reality that exists between the river and the sea: *home* cannot be conceived as a private sphere of intimacy where houses are routinely violated by midnight military raids, as in the West Bank, or where they might any day be pummeled into concrete and ash, as in Gaza.

Today, I find, I can no longer set terms side by side, even to show their incommensurability. I cannot, at present, think intimately with the sovereign intimate. I might explain by enumerating and evoking the mechanisms of mass slaughter to which Israel is subjecting Palestinians in Gaza, or by invoking an urgent need to bear witness to the ongoing genocide, and particularly, to focus our energies as cultural workers on Israel's calculated assault on Palestinian cultural memory and knowledge production. I might say: Now is the time to attune ourselves to silenced Palestinian voices, to organize boycott and divestment actions, to disrupt *everything*, *everywhere*, to dismantle the machinery of death. Indeed we should, as I'm sure my colleagues here agree. But there will also be moments soon, after a ceasefire, and before the liberation of Palestine that will come, to sit with the uncomfortable, indeterminate intimacies of amateur Israeli media mourning killed Israeli soldiers and their anecdotal reaffirmations of settler sovereignty. For now, I can only mark a space to return to thinking with Laliv and her valuable study, then.

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Debashree Mukherjee

India's turn to authoritarianism now seems complete. Just consider the latest police raid and interrogation of almost fifty prominent journalists on Tuesday (October 3, 2023).[1] Social media, mainstream news channels, even narrative fiction, have been central to the lead-up to this moment. The last decade is a blur of vitriolic messages frantically forwarded on WhatsApp, the relentlessness of 24/7 news broadcasts with fevered debates on "enemies" and "traitors," and the steady stream of Bollywood films trotting out Islamophobia, misogyny, and anti-Pakistan jingoism. The Indian public sphere has witnessed an undeniable, accelerated mediatization of hate and weaponization of the media.

This turn to mediatized right-wing populism is not restricted to India alone. Many of us, be it in the United States, Turkey, Belgium, or the United Kingdom, are struggling to find a language to properly address the ways in which ethnonationalist discourse has seeped into the capillaries of everyday life, ready to accuse any critique of the state of being "anti-national." A recent wave of anticolonial scholars finds something amiss in our academic inheritance. For Hafsa Kanjwal, it is the glaring omissions in dominant postcolonial historiography in India. The ideological paradoxes in this scholarship, she suggests, are baffling, where scholars can agree that "nation-states can act like

colonizers, have 'colonizing tendencies' and take on structures of or continuities from colonial rule, but somehow, they can never be actual colonizers." Kanjwal, writing on the colonization of Kashmir, identifies methodological nationalism as the culprit, an unstated "statism, which naturalizes the (Indian) nation-state form and denies its coloniality."[2] In an adjacent context, Esmat Elhalaby surveys literature on Zionism and finds that intellectuals and scholars dwell in a culture of denial. "Purportedly aghast at what their Israel has become, some intellectuals—rather than reckoning honestly with the past—resort to desperate exercises in obfuscation."[3] These are the blind spots that *Sovereign Intimacy* confronts from an urgent new vantage point, looking not at extraordinary sites of spectacular national and colonial violence, but at the everyday dispersal and diffusion of ideological affects through private media.

To do so, Laliv Melamed takes on a vexing subject for study: home videos made by Israeli families to mourn and memorialize their children who have died in military service. Zooming in on the thorny entanglement of intimate feelings and state violence, she interrogates how the affective and personal can be instrumentalized in service of the state's agenda. Power often works in banal or unthought ways, ones in which the spaces of home, commute, work, or leisure can be suffused with messages that serve to reinforce the dominant order. These are spaces that are seemingly outside of politics, which makes them all the more susceptible to propagandistic infiltration. *Sovereign Intimacy* goes beyond ideas of inside-outside and private-public to get into the *cracks* of the home (which is how the world gets in); into the interstices of the family, where the state might always loom as a father figure or the hungry monster that wants your children. But, crucially—and we must dwell on this point—Melamed dismantles the sacred status of the family in global heteropatriarchal cultures, and questions ideas of the home as an insulated space of privacy that must be protected from political contamination.

Love is the subject of the memorial video and love is the ideological claim that confirms Israel's sovereign power. As Melamed writes in the introduction, "Video [since the late 1990s] articulates a new claim, a claim for the right to love. . . . Family mourning imagines a space of love outside sovereign politics. Yet love is not outside militarism or colonization, but at their very core" (3). Thinking from the context of India, this focus on love resonates deeply. Since the installation of the current Hindu extremist regime in India, many in my generation have felt a profound rupture in their relations of love—with friends, family, and lovers who have crossed to the other side, labeling us as "public enemies" and objects of disdain, even hate.[4] This rupture has not taken place overnight, and it has been effected through insidious rather than extravagant means.

In chapter 3, "Scheduled Memories, Programmed Mourning," Melamed takes us into the structured world of broadcast television and how the homemade "martyr video" became institutionalized in Israel's national calendar. Melamed ponders television's affordances and arrives at the affective production of proximity, immediacy, reciprocity—each predicated on television's elastic relation to time. She picks an intriguing archival artifact: programming schedules for two major Israeli commercial networks in the 2000s. These schedules were printed in the leisure section of daily newspapers. Melamed analyzes them as "time maps"

that offer clues as to how memory fits inside a schematic infrastructure of mass synchronization. For example, in a section titled "Nation Time," Melamed produces an astonishing atmospheric montage where we begin at 8 p.m. stuck in city traffic as a siren loudly brings the country to a stop, announcing the start of Memorial Day, which is marked from 8 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the ritual time of Jewish holidays—sunset to sunset. This sonic signal is amplified across a relay network of speakers, radio, and television, beginning the period of synchronized collective mourning that is the work of the day. The humble TV schedule mimics these temporal rituals of the nation and reinforces divisions between a time to work, a time to rest, and a time to mourn. The programming schedule plots out the time of the nation, with television doing the work of synchronizing secular citizens into an "imagined community."[5]

A close reading of programming schedules allows Melamed to name and define the most mundane time-spaces on television—those segments of screen time that are too short or too irregular to be properly occupied by "good content." One of the cruel ironies of the ambivalent aesthetic status of the memorial video is that it is often used as filler in between well-produced shows, or as reruns. Here, Melamed observes, the sacrificial citizen-subject becomes endlessly programmable: "Being programmed means being liable to endless repetition, being imbricated in the larger frame, as a filler or a rerun" (133). Another, darker temporal horizon emerges from this observation—the fact that each memorial video made for a fallen soldier serves as a call to future martyrs in the service of the nation. The repetitive nature of Memorial Day programming, the annual ritual repetition of the mandated day of mourning; all these repetitions serve to naturalize the real horror of the situation—Israel's perpetual war, and thus its perpetual cycle of violence, death, and mourning.

In her writing about national museums, art historian Kavita Singh notes that "it is often said that heritage construction depends on the production of collective memory; equally vital to this process is the production of collective amnesia."[6] *Sovereign Intimacy* deals with a different order of memorialization, not the monumental display form of the national museum, but rather the largely low-budget, unremarkable amateur home video. Yet its powerful affective appeal is essential for the settler-colonial state to co-opt. Here absence is structured through the ritualization of presence, or as Melamed phrases it, "the double bind in which to remember means to forget" (115). The structuring absence in these videos, and the discourse around them, is Palestine, for "the occupation of Palestine and the Palestinian people have no representation on the Memorial Day programming schedule" (113). Melamed's focus on the psychic and affective helps us understand the techniques involved in the epistemic erasure of Palestinian trauma. "Necropolitics," she writes, "distribute death as sacred for one section of the population and life as disposable or already-dead for the other" (225). This is a diagnosis of the nation-state as a form of morbidity, an uncanny death machine that can be affectively understood with the help of the "small machine" of the home television set.

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Alisa Lebow

In the late 1990s, film studies developed a fascination with testimony, which itself emerged from psychoanalysis-inclined Holocaust and trauma studies. Given the

emphasis on talking-heads interviews and the historical privileging of victims' perspectives in documentary through the years, it comes as no surprise that testimony should also have been an important focus in the subfield of documentary studies. Volumes such as *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (ed. Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, Wallflower/Columbia University Press, 2007) and *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering* (ed. Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker, Routledge, 2009) explore the importance of the witness and testimony in documentary film from what appears to be every possible angle, including discussions that range from the Armenian genocide to the atrocities of Cambodia, Rwanda, and Sudan.

While Melamed is not insensible to these important contributions, she nonetheless complicates them by suggesting there is yet another dimension to the work of testimony that has been overlooked. She gently chides that "while testimony was mobilized as a means of giving voice to a suffering subject—an important cause in itself—the complex frameworks of sovereign exclusion were too easily ignored." Indeed, until recently most of these theoretical interventions have been made with a presumed alignment to the perspective of the victim. For Melamed, the documentary testimonial "assumes an ethical position, valorizing testimony as an act of truth-speaking." While the problems with victimology and the potential for condescension have been amply (though not necessarily effectively) mooted in our field, one persistent blind spot has been the assumption that testimony always, necessarily, stands on the side of righteousness.[7] If testimony is taken up by the perpetrator, the assumption no longer holds. When a soldier of an invading army explores his PTSD in *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008), for example, surely it does not occupy the same moral ground as the testimony of a survivor of the massacre at Sabra and Shatila refugee camp that his military and its mercenaries committed. When a soldier of that same army, forty years later, holds up a rainbow flag as a justification of a genocidal campaign in his own nation's illegally occupied territory, he mobilizes testimony in the service of the sovereign's project, effectively realigning a victim's discourse with power itself.

Perpetrator studies emerged in the documentary field a decade or two after trauma studies took hold. Prompted by films such as Rithy Panh's groundbreaking *S21: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine* (2003), his later follow-up film Duch: *Master of the Forges of Hell* (2011), along with *Waltz with Bashir* and *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cynn, and anonymous, 2012), scholars such as Raya Morag and Deirdre Boyle began to reckon with the inverted relations these films seemed to enact, setting so many certainties about documentary and its affinities on their proverbial head. Suddenly the perpetrators stood in the place of the victim, and where viewers had been accustomed to receiving these testimonies as ethical utterances that speak truth to power, their training no longer served. In these films, the witness that affirms the truth becomes a vehicle through which sovereign power is, in some sense, reaffirmed. Face to face with murderers and perpetrators of genocide, testimony isn't a matter of setting the historical record straight, nor can it be neatly aligned with the humanitarian project upon which so many victim testimonies rely. And yet, one finds that viewer habits are not always so easily changed. Sympathy and identification lurk as a potential, if baited, response.

Joshua Oppenheimer is fond of

prodding his audience—proud of having constructed a sympathetic character out of his murderous subject, Anwar, in *The Act of Killing*, asserting that Anwar's acts of brutality are available to us all, and thus inviting us as viewers to identify with him. To what political, ideological, or moral end, we might wonder, are we asked to make this identificatory leap, not of faith but of despair, given that it assumes we are all, deep down, morally rootless? For Melamed, however, the question of identification may be the least of the problem. She takes the issue further, suggesting that those who deliver the testimonies considered in her book—bereaved family members of military personnel who represent a brutal occupying power—may resemble victims of injustice, but their speech and their positionality aligns with nothing so much as "the system" in all its repressive force. The system which validates their account, in other words, is and always has been the law. And the law, at the end of the day, is an instrument most finely tuned to the needs and demands of the sovereign. It is the aggressor state, the occupying power, the settler-colonial project which, in Melamed's memorial video case studies and other perpetrator-focused works, demands full complicity in the form of viewer identification. It is for this reason that the bereaved's testimony, both within the memorial videos and extratextually, upends any previously assumed affinities between testimony and justice. Moving image testimony may be a tool in the pursuit of justice, but that doesn't mean it's always just.

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Daniel Mann

The 1982 French film *The Return of Martin Guerre* tells the odd story of a man who left his village in Artigat in 1548 to go to war. After an absence of several years, he returns, knocking on the door of his old home to find his family still awaiting his return. Before long, however, some begin to suspect that this is not Martin Guerre at all. Something is off. It seems that it is him, but at the same time a stranger. Can one really misrecognize a loved one after only a few years' absence? In a way, this is also the animating question of Sovereign Intimacy, except, here, Guerre is the body of a fallen Israeli soldier that returns as a grainy image. The absent body flickering on the screen becomes a source of both love and scrutiny. It is painfully familiar but also uncanny and strange. The fallen body underwrites a media of love, secrecy, and, ultimately, the deadly war machine of the Israeli state.

At the heart of Melamed's book is the representation of the absent male body as a mediator between the state and the private home. The home that unravels is the one in which Jewish Israelis participate in national memory and commemoration ceremonies that flicker on their television screens. It is where they film each other and store their tapes as objects of desire. Finally, it is where the soldier is transformed back into a family member and where disciplinary power is domesticated. Excavating dozens of videos edited by the grieving families of Israeli soldiers killed in wars, Sovereign Intimacy opens an underexplored facet of Israeli-made soft power that floods the domestic sphere with violent affection. Through amateur, rough, and, dare I say, exceptionally weird videos produced by the families of soldiers, the sovereignty that military uniformity comes to represent turns painfully intimate, tailored to fit the particular faces and bodies of sons and loved ones. The soldier, the son, and/or the lover stand, pixelated, at the center of the frame. Yet, in these private

and personal videos, intimacy is inseparable from its destructive side. Violence converted into love, back to violence, back to love; this is the spinning turbine of the intimate sovereign's labor.

One particular video was produced to memorialize Guy Golan, a soldier who, in 1997, died alongside eleven others during a covert operation in Lebanon when a series of IEDs were detonated. This military calamity—known today as the Shayetet Disaster—and its subsequent publication in the Israeli popular media sparked a heated debate about the state's failure, not merely to fulfill the operation, but also to communicate the disaster to the families of the dead and, ultimately, to the Israeli public. What's more, the military attempted to hide the details of the event, which led to a legal procedure against the state.

Sovereignty leaks into the homes of Jewish Israeli civilians through the images of young men such as Guy Golan, who died in service. Importantly, this leakage of the sovereign into the homes of families happens precisely when the state momentarily fails or is rendered feeble. Moments of failure are impregnated with a unique meaning wherein responsibility is transferred back to the family unit. The paths that lead back to the private home are thus initially drawn by the state's inability to promise total security. Yet, as Melamed teases out, the entry into the family's privacy isn't simply a failure on the side of the state, but in fact a means to invigorate sovereignty through its "secret weapon": intimacy.

Some things stay in the family. The family photographers embedded into the edited video privilege the nuclear family by naturalizing, romanticizing, and idealizing family relationships, which are in turn projected as a national affinity. Perhaps, Melamed hints, the Jewish state itself operates as a family unit, and like in all families, secrecy is essential to its functioning. This is the affirmative logic behind the emergence of the highly personalized and intimate format broadcast on public television. What, exactly, must stay in the family? Secrets that the state wishes to keep away from the Israeli public? Or is it the supremacy of the Jewish-Israeli household that is the open secret? If, as philosopher Hagar Kotef argues, the household is the core of Israeli settler colonialism, the body of the family member is the conduit that connects it to the military. "The family—its love, its media—is anecdotal to sovereign violence," Melamed writes, "yet not antithetical, rather a surreptitious conduit in which the state's institutional power of shaping, managing, or taking life is domesticated, internalized, and reaffirmed."

Where the family is conjured to replace the state, it is shadowed by its negative image: that which is outside the family. These affective home videos are haunted by their repressed double. As they celebrate family life and the home as a nonpolitical haven, they become weapons wielded at what they deny. Against the homeliness of the home movies presenting soldiers with their loved ones, one can conjure the video footage recorded by those same soldiers deployed in raids into homes in Gaza and the West Bank. Captured with GoPros or smartphones, soldiers document their own deployment, moving from the exterior to the interior of homes in continuous shots. Sometimes those same videos bear uncanny similarities to the commemoration video itself. A kind of anti–home movie emerges in which the furniture, beds, books, and domestic utilities appear as objects bound up with the absent Palestinian inhabitants of the home, such that we can

no longer separate the dispossession of the one from the destruction of the other. This duality, whereby one home movie reaffirms domesticity while the other undoes it, saturates the body of Golan, whose smile and strong body reappear through the grain of the image. That body, both an agent of military occupation and a son/lover, holds this duality intact.

Sovereign Intimacy concludes with a striking juxtaposition:

> A knock on the door for one, and a knock on the roof for the other; for one, it is a call of recognition, for the other of elimination. They both anticipate that the sovereign is about to enter the home.

At the end of the day, the sovereign enters unannounced. If there's a knock, it's just a formality. The knock that anticipates the soldier's return; of Martin Guerre. Is he the good old Martin Guerre, or a malevolent intruder? The truth is that he is always other and the same.

Endnotes

1 Sheikh Saaliq, "Indian police arrest a news site's editor and administrator after raiding homes of journalists," *Associated Press*, October 5, 2023, https://apnews.com/article/india-press-freedom-newsclick-arrest-raid-3faa0830e9f3bcd4e75f1b7df404f432.

2 Hafsa Kanjwal, *Colonizing Kashmir: State-building under Indian Occupation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023), 83.

3 Esmat Elhalaby, "A Dying Postcolonialism," *The Abusable Past*, September 26, 2023, https://abusablepast.org/a-dying-postcolonialism/.

4 For a longer meditation on these ruptures, see my article on Payal Kapadia's 2021 documentary *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, in *Film Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2022): 11–22.

5 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Books, 1983).

6 Kavita Singh, "Remembering and Forgetting in the National Museum," in *Museums, Transculturality, and the Nation-State: Case Studies from a Global Context*, ed. Susanne Leeb and Nina Samuel (Bielefeld, Germany: transcript Verlag, 2022), 53–86.

7 The critical literature on victimology starts with Brian Winston's "The Tradition of the Victim in the Griersonian Documentary," originally published in 1988, republished in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 763–75.

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