



Redemptive Constellations

Irish-Palestinian Relays in Emily Jacir's *Notes for a Cannon*

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On and after midnight the 1st OCTOBER 1916 the Western European Time will be observed throughout Ireland. All clocks and watches should be put back 20 minutes during the night 29th SEPTEMBER-1st OCTOBER.

The proper time to make the change is 2 A.M. Summer Time and the correction to the normal winter is 1st OCTOBER 1916.

BY APPOINTMENT TO HER MAJESTY



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The historian who proceeds from this consideration ceases to tell the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. He grasps the constellation into which his own era has entered, along with a very specific earlier one. Thus, he establishes a conception of the present as now-time shot through with splinters of Messianic time.¹

Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History'

(All images in this article are of work by Emily Jacir), *Notes for a Cannon*, 2016, installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, 2016, photo: Denis Mortell

Imagine, if you will, entering a long corridor, illuminated from the left by tall windows, on the right, a long wall on which constellations of images, photos, artefacts and text cluster as on some forensic whiteboard in a police procedural. But your eye may be drawn away to a screen that fills the wall at the end of the corridor, a second, small video screen on the floor at its left-hand corner. The moving images draw your gaze.

Such was the public's initial overview of Palestinian artist Emily Jacir's site-specific sound and visual installation, *Notes for a Cannon* at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2016–2017, the opening salvo, so to speak, of her show 'Europa' (both the Italian and the Arabic word for Europe), a version of which had previously been installed at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. There, Jacir explicitly planned 'Europa' to focus on her manifold practice in Europe, Italy and the Mediterranean, in particular Rome where she has lived on and off since she was fourteen years old.² The addition at IMMA of a site-specific installation that drew texts and images from Palestine into disjunctive relation with Irish materials suggested an entirely different framing of the show. That framing, in jux-

1 Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', Harry Zohn, trans, in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, eds, *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938–1940*, Edmund Jephcott and others, trans, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003, p 397

2 For an excellent overview of Jacir's work and of the Whitechapel 'Europa' show, see Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, 'Influences: Emily Jacir', in *Frieze*, 21 October 2015: <https://frieze.com/article/influences-emily-jacir>, accessed 17 September 2019.

taping and relating two colonial spaces, shed an oblique light on the concerns of the show as a whole, bringing forward the (post)colonial conditions that inform her practice. As I will argue in this article, however, the installation did not seek to assert similitudes or analogies of a totalising kind between the histories or lived experiences of Ireland and Palestine. Rather, Jacir works with fragmentation at every level, from the actual material conditions of Palestinian life under Israeli settler colonialism and occupation to the assemblage of fragments that constitutes the installation itself. The lines of connection, both between actual historical practices and among corresponding cultural forms, produce constellations of memory and solidarity out of the damaged and shattered archives that are typical of colonial pasts.

In this context, the work on the large screen at the end of the corridor, which might initially have seemed an anomalous infiltrator in an exhibition nominally focused on Europe, begins to make sense as a kind of exergue to the whole. The audio-visual installation *Crossing Surda (a record of going to and from work)* bears no obvious relation to Europe. Shot during the Second Intifada in 2002, *Crossing Surda* is a meticulous recording of Jacir's daily walks to and from Ramallah to her work at Birzeit University, which at that time obliged her, like any other Palestinian needing to use the same route, to pass through an Israeli checkpoint that had made the road impassable except to pedestrians.

Since some commentators on the work mistakenly refer to this as a border crossing, it is important to emphasise that the checkpoint at Surda is internal to the area of the West Bank supposedly under direct control of the Palestinian Authority and is a considerable distance from the Green Line that marks the internationally recognised boundary between Israel and any future Palestinian state, at least under the still-prevalent model of the 'two-state solution'. Surda's checkpoint, then, belongs with some six hundred or more mobile and fixed checkpoints that segment occupied Palestine internally. Imposed for putative security reasons, these checkpoints, however, do not guard Israel's borders but constitute an essential element in the ways in which, under a regime of occupation and martial law, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) control, on a daily basis, the movement of Palestinians within and without Palestine. What Jacir records in *Crossing Surda* may be her own daily and compulsory walks to and from work, but it is no less the record of a collectively lived experience, one of collective punishment inflicted on a whole people by an occupying power.

Jacir's own account of the video eloquently outlines its occasion, capturing the violence and arbitrariness of occupation as well as its indiscriminate effects:

On December 9th, 2002, I decided to record my daily walk to work across the Surda checkpoint to Birzeit University. When the Israeli Occupation Army saw me filming my feet with my video camera, they stopped me and asked for my I.D. I gave them my American passport, and they threw it in the mud. They told me that this was 'Israel' and that it was a military zone and that no filming was allowed. They detained me at gunpoint in the winter rain next to their tank. After three hours, they confiscated my videotape and then released me. I watched the soldier slip



Stills from *Crossing Surda (a record of going to and from work)*, 2002, two-channel video installation, photos: courtesy of the artist

my videotape into the pocket of his army pants. That night when I returned home, I cut a hole in my bag and put my video camera in the bag. I recorded my daily walk across Surda checkpoint, to and from work, for eight days. All people including the disabled, elderly, and children must walk distances as far as two kilometres depending on the decisions of the Israeli army at any given time. When Israeli soldiers decide that there should be no movement on the road, they shoot live ammunition, tear gas, and sound bombs to disperse people from the checkpoint.³

³ Emily Jacir, cited in 'Emily Jacir', Alwan for the Arts, <http://www.alwanforthearts.org/emily-jacir>, accessed 10 September 2019

Shot from the peculiar angle of a hidden, hip-high camera, the video records moment by moment Jacir's walk and that of her fellow pedestrians continuing to perform their daily business, despite the difficulties imposed by the road closure and checkpoints, not to mention the unpredictable and arbitrary eruption of violence, with tear gas and rubber bullets. An old man passes with his plastic shopping bags in hand; women descend towards Ramallah from the villages and refugee camps that would normally have been accessible by the ubiquitous Palestinian servees or minibus taxis; young students head towards Birzeit's campus. At moments, the treads of an Israeli tank or the silhouette of a soldier will become visible on the churned-up dirt road, or you will see the puffs of tear gas that signal another, more violent interruption of routine under a regime of ubiquitous threat. As Jacir has succinctly remarked, '*Crossing Surda* exists because an Israeli soldier threatened me and put an M-16 into my temple... If I had not had this direct threatening experience this piece would not exist.'⁴

Invisible behind the camera that records, secret surveillor of surveillance, Jacir nonetheless shadows the workings of occupation, at times quite literally as her shadow falls across the ground, marking her presence and her movement. But *Crossing Surda* is not only a visual record; it also documents the ambient sound of passing pedestrians, snippets of their conversations, the noise of tank engines or military commands, and, above all, the sound of feet trudging the sandy surface of the unpaved road. This sound that dominates the audio track is rarely commented on, though it is crucial to the ways in which *Crossing Surda* so meticulously documents the day-to-day phenomenology of occupation. It is the sound of steps brushing the wet and gritty surface of a rough and unpaved road, deliberately ploughed up by IDF bulldozers to render it impassable, its slushy texture further slowing movement and hindering even this pedestrian traffic. It resonates with the arduousness and the tediousness of the movement to work that the occupying power has dreamed up as a means of 'making life difficult' for the occupied, means both systematic and arbitrary in their unpredictable infliction. It is, literally and figuratively, the noise of friction.

We could say, after David Harvey, that the goal and ideal of modernity is to produce frictionless space, a space that presents the least possible hindrance to the movement of goods and finance, that facilitates the circulation of commodities and capital and, in certain cases, of persons.⁵ In that regard, Israeli settlers are the denizens of modernity, their movement between the illegal settlements that occupy the hilltops of the West Bank and the urban centres of Israel accelerated by smoothly paved bypass roads and unhindered by checkpoints. Ease of movement becomes a gesture of appropriation, signalling the incorporation of stolen land by the state. By comparison, Palestinians are subject to a regime of friction, their movements interrupted at every point by checkpoints, road closures, detours along the secondary roads to which they are restricted, and by the very network of roads and gated communities that not only facilitate settler circulation but also segment Palestinian space into an archipelago of disconnected islets. Fragmentation as an effect of the regime of occupation is designed to govern and inhibit Palestinian movement internally as

4 Michael Z Wise, 'Border Crossings Between Art and Life', *New York Times*, 30 January 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/01/arts/design/01wise.html>, accessed 10 September 2019

5 David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, pp 284–307. What Harvey in the chapter on 'time-space compression' in modernity terms the 'diminution of spatial barriers' (p 295) approximates the condition of 'frictionless space' that would be the ideal of colonial capital in abolishing the delays between production and consumption occasioned by distance.

6 Magid Shihade, 'The Place of Israel in Asia: Settler Colonialism, Mobility, Memory, and Identity among Palestinians in Israel', *Settler Colonial Studies*, vol 6, no 2, May 2016, p 140. Jacir's sound installation, *Untitled (servees)*, produced as a site-specific work and installed in 2008 at Damascus Gate, in Jerusalem's Old City, meditates on the now impossible routes formerly taken by Palestinian servees, which 'had direct links to Beirut, Amman, Baghdad, Kuwait as well as every urban Palestinian center such as Lyd, Jaffa, Ramallah, Nablus, Gaza, and Ramle'. See Adila Lairdi-Hanieh, 'Destination: Jerusalem Servees – An Interview with Emily Jacir', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 40, 2009, p 64: <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jq/fulltext/78340>, accessed 10 September 2019.

7 See Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley, *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid*, a report commissioned by UNESCWA, the UN's Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, United Nations, Beirut, 2017. This report was removed from UNESCWA's website after protests by the USA and Israel, leading to the resignation of UNESCWA's then head, Rima Khalaf, but has been archived here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/342202464/Israeli-Practices-towards-the-Palestinian-People-and-the-Question-of-Apartheid>, accessed 10 September 2019. For the circumstances of Khalaf's resignation, see Alison Deger, 'Head of UN agency resigns after refusing to retract report calling Israel an "apartheid regime"', *Mondoweiss*, 17 March 2017: <http://mondoweiss.net/2017/03/resigns-refusing-apartheid/>, accessed 10 September 2019.

well as across the boundaries that seal Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem into non-communicating zones. The obstacles placed on travelling the short distance between Ramallah and Birzeit that Jacir documents is a minuscule instance of a vast regime of control and dispossession. The function of that regime is both to make movement and circulation arduous and to separate formerly integrated Palestinian communities from one another and from the wider world of the Mediterranean, Africa and West Asia with which Palestine had enduring historical connections. As Palestinian scholar Magid Shihade has argued, 'in a settler colonial context both war and "peace" produce similar developments when it comes to the native population: more confinement, less mobility, greater estrangement and alienation from their own geography and from one another'. Its further effect is the 'de-development' of the Palestinian society and economy, imposing conditions that make the time and space of modernity unavailable. As Shihade concludes: 'It is too often assumed that modernity is about movement, but in reality regulation and segregation of movement is actually the core aim of the modern state, acutely so in the case of the settler colonial type.'⁶

A set of maps of Palestine from 1947 to the present is by now widely known. It depicts the gradual loss of Palestinian land, appropriated by Israel in 1948, 1967, and since. It is also a map of a land fragmented and parcelled out into isolated enclaves, disjoined from one another by the apartheid wall, by Israel's illegal settlements, and by the Israeli-only roads that connect them. The last map in the series, of Palestine in the present, is the map of a landlocked archipelago, a shattered mosaic of disconnected spaces. Spatial fragmentation, as a recent UN report concluded, is the fundamental condition of Palestinian life, whether under an occupation that imposes roadblocks, checkpoints, closures and detours, or under a siege that has turned all Gaza into an open-air prison, or in the dispersal among scattered refugee camps and the nations of the world that has been the fate of refugees, denied the right of return to homes all over historic Palestine.⁷ The exile of Palestinians in their seventy-year-long diaspora across the globe is itself an instance of the fragmentation of Palestine that is in turn exploited to proclaim that there is no Palestinian nation and therefore no rationale for establishing a Palestinian state.

The experience of exile and dislocation is also temporal, beyond those frustrations of delay, waiting and suspense that characterise the immediate effect of the segmentation imposed by martial law. To be displaced or exiled, or to be cut off from the sites of communal memory and ongoing collective life, is – as every exile or migrant knows – to be fragmented across time, lacking the continuities that tie memory and subjectivity to community and place. Who holds for us the continuity of our scattered selves, the record of who and where we have been? Enforced displacement is not only an assault on the spatial integrity of a people and on the fundamental right to freedom of movement; it is also a systematic attack on historical and individual memory, disconnecting the individual and the collective from the particulate grain of location and shared or contested memory. It constitutes what Edward Said, in 'Reflections on Exile', named 'a fundamentally discontinuous state of

being'.⁸ Displacement, however, demands not nostalgia, but a deliberate and reflective effort of continual reconstitution of broken archives and occluded connections, a critical relation to both discontinuity and to fictive claims of belonging and settlement. Exile can become, in Said's words, the occasion for 'an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life', a vantage that transforms an inflicted fragmentation into the means to unfold a dialectic between disconnection and connection, displacement and forms of solidarity that dispense with identification. It is the means to forms that are 'nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal'.⁹

Emily Jacir's work has long inhabited and reflected this space and time of fragmentation, 'including movement (both forced and voluntary), repressed historical narratives, resistance, political land divisions, and the logic of the archive'.¹⁰ More, hers is a work committed to the redemption of the fragments and relics of violently broken histories. For some time, she has worked extensively in the mode of assemblage, piecing together into constellations of memory and correspondence the overlooked objects and damaged archives that, by virtue of their very fragmentation, are all the more charged with the burden of bearing historical memory and future hope. It may be the gathering of books looted by Israeli forces from Palestinian libraries and stored in their archives as 'abandoned property', books that still bear the marks and traces of lives lived and disappeared (*ex libris*, 2010–2012). Or it may be the painstaking reconstitution and preservation of abandoned footage of a refugee camp in Lebanon, Tel al Zaatar, witness to so much persistence and destruction (*Tel al Zaatar Project*, 2013–2014). Or it may be the reinvention in a Milan church of the Stations of the Cross through shards of Palestinian memory, *Via Crucis* (2016), a 'translation' of the traditional stations of Christ's passion into the way stations of Palestinian exile and displacement: in place of the nails, spent IDF M-16 shells gathered on the West Bank; in place of the cloth with which Veronica wiped Christ's face, a faded ghostly photo of a Palestinian family; in place of the tomb, and its sealing slab, a reddish *slayeb* stone, native to the village of Bayt Jalla, near Bethlehem, that is now sealed off by an Israeli settlement on stolen land. These quotidian objects generate resonances between Christ's passion in ancient Palestine and the Palestinians' contemporary *via dolorosa*. But they also resonate beyond, marking the correspondence between the fate of Palestinian refugees and that of others fleeing the violence inflicted on them by imperial wars in West Asia and Africa, arriving on Greek or Italian shores, or – like the piece of blue Venetian glass – condensing the whole history of the Mediterranean as a sea that divides and connects even as it quietly bears the record of the glass-blowing techniques the Venetians learnt from the Palestinian craftsmen of Hebron.

The installation that occupied most of the right-hand wall along that corridor at IMMA, *Notes for a Cannon* (2016), likewise performed a contrapuntal set of linkages between dispersed locations and times, constellating histories of Palestine and Ireland in a magnetic field of correspondence and convergence. The work, which Jacir described as a kind of 'throwing open' of her sketchbook, constituted, not a didactic process of instruction defining the convergences and comparisons between two discrete spaces, but an ongoing, and ultimately collective 'sketch-work' that kept enabling the discovery of past and present interconnections between two sites that

8 Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, p 177

9 Said, 'Reflections on Exile', op cit, p 184, p 186

10 Jacir, in Laïdi-Hanieh, 'Destination', op cit, p 64



Notes for a Cannon, 2016, (top: Limerick Junction), installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, 2016, photos: Denis Mortell

are geographically remote but bound together by historical, actual and analogical links. Both the land and the culture of Ireland and Palestine are marked by imperialism and settler colonialism and by an enduring resistance to them. But Jacir did not force these distinct locations into direct correspondence: rather, the whole assemblage of this work, which included a sound installation from the bell tower of the old Kilmainham military hospital that now houses IMMA as well as the visual materials and artefacts arrayed along the wall and floor of its corridor, remained open to continual reading and recomposition.

Part of that process of recomposition was conditioned by the movement of the spectator through the space of the installation and around its reassemblage of distinct elements. Necessarily, the viewer's first approach to *Notes for a Cannon*, through the doorway leading into the corridor, obliged a reading of the materials from right to left, a disorienting movement in itself for the Western reader accustomed to a left-to-right direction of reading. Moving and reading along the corridor made of the viewer's location an experience of displacement even before she engaged with the shifting constellations of dislocated materials that composed its text. Looking back at the dominant segment of the installation on the right wall from the end of the corridor, and with the resonances of *Crossing Surda* still in mind and ear, one's sense of the whole was dramatically reoriented around a large black and white photograph that dominated the view. In the photograph, a uniformed man stands at the roadside, vehicle parked behind him, in a landscape that at first sight might seem to be the limestone plateaus of the Burren. To the man's left stands a signpost, topped by a board that proclaims 'Limerick Junction'. The arms of the signpost, however, designate locations in Palestine: Ramallah and Birzeit, Nabi Saleh and the monastery town of Latrun, and the villages of Umm Safa, Attara and Ajjul.

Foregrounding this signpost, which seeks to make the landscape legible to an occupying military power, the British Army that had imposed martial law over Palestine after the capture of Jerusalem from the Ottomans in 1917, the photo instead stands as an index of dislocation.¹¹ What is the designation Limerick Junction doing on a signpost in Palestine? What connections link those who placed it in Palestine – presumably British military engineers – and an Irish railway junction? What recognition of comparability between Ireland and Palestine lies behind some British sapper's jest? Was it the work of a soldier in the 10th (Irish) Division that served in Palestine from October 1917 to April 1918? Or that of some other member of any of the regiments that would have contributed to the force of twenty-five to thirty thousand troops normally stationed in Ireland at that time?¹² To any British soldier who had been stationed in Ireland, whether of Irish origin or not, Limerick Junction would of course have been familiar as the point of intersection of the Great Southern and Western and the Waterford and Limerick railways, thus a crucial point of access to both the south and the west and to the many British garrisons in towns like Cork, Clonmel, Galway or Castlebar. Its invocation on a signpost in the Palestinian landscape may have suggested the similar importance of this junction for British troop movements during the recent war and subsequent British occupation under the Mandate.

These historical questions remain speculative, but the photo's placement in Jacir's installation, which meditates on Irish-Palestinian connections,

11 John J McTague Jr, 'The British Military Administration in Palestine 1917–1920', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol 7, no 3, spring, 1978, p 56

12 On the British troops regularly occupying Ireland in the early twentieth century, see J J Lee, 'The Background: Anglo-Irish Relations, 1898–1921', in Cormac K H O'Malley and Anne Dolan, eds, 'No Surrender Here!' *The Civil War Papers of Ernie O'Malley 1922–1924*, Lilliput Press, Dublin, 2007, p xi.

opens up a quite different set of considerations. The signpost is an index that is both spatially and temporally ‘out of place’ and that through its dislocation signals a different order of connection. The larger frame for those connections is what Jacir describes in her comments for IMMA as ‘the shared history of British Colonial Rule’ that both Ireland and Palestine underwent, if for very different lengths of time.¹³ Palestine’s relatively late subjection to British colonial rule from 1917 meant that it entered into an imperial system with well-established modes of government, policing and bureaucracy, together with a long history of counter-insurgency against anti-colonial movements. As Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi argues,

Very little that Great Britain did in Palestine, or in any other colony, mandate, possession or sphere of influence, was without a referent to its rich colonial heritage, notably in India and Ireland. In particular, the colonial practices that British officials brought to bear in the different parts of the far-flung empire they controlled were profoundly inflected by hundreds of years of experience accumulated by the British governing classes in ruling over the Irish and the Indians.

More specifically, he goes on, ‘The stratagems the British developed in dealing with the Irish, and in particular the rhetorical styles and patterns of derogatory discourse they deployed – such as the utilization of the term “terrorist”, or in an earlier era “criminal” – were prototypes for their efforts to control, diminish, and denigrate other peoples, and disrupt their national resistance.’¹⁴ Not least among these stratagems, practised in both Ireland and India – and one that anticipates the ongoing Israeli effort to fragment the Palestinian population among Christian, Muslim, Druze, Bedouin and so forth – was the instigation of communalism in a population for which relative harmony among different religious groups had been the norm, establishing, for example, ‘Islamic institutions’ that had no precedent in Ottoman Palestine. This innovation was predicated, Khalidi argues, on ‘a worldview that almost invariably perceived colonized societies in religious and communitarian rather than in national terms and as profoundly divided internally rather than as potentially unified’.¹⁵

Other, more direct connections linked the British Mandate regime in Palestine to the Empire’s Irish experience. Most significantly, early on in the Mandate’s history, Winston Churchill as Colonial Secretary established the British Gendarmerie in Palestine, composing it almost entirely of former members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and its auxiliary force, the Black and Tans, under the command of his friend and Irish Police Chief during the War of Independence, General Hugh Tudor. Former Black and Tans and RIC members, many of whom faced threats to their lives because of the atrocities for which they were held responsible during the Anglo-Irish War, from extrajudicial murders to the burning of homes in reprisal for IRA actions, were encouraged to volunteer for this new Palestinian police force.¹⁶ Churchill’s formation of this ‘picked force of white gendarmerie’ aptly illustrates Khalidi’s point about the persistent transfer of British stratagems between different colonial sites – even those that had most singularly failed to achieve their objectives.

Briefing papers drafted in Whitehall noted, meanwhile, the strong similarities between the police forces Britain established in Ireland and

13 ‘Europa, a major exhibition by Palestinian artist Emily Jacir opens at Irish Museum of Modern Art’, <https://imma.ie/about/press-centre/europa-a-major-exhibition-by-acclaimed-palestinian-artist-emily-jacir-opens-at-imma/>, accessed 10 September 2019

14 Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 2007, pp 48–49

15 *Ibid*, p 53

16 David Cronin, ‘Bringing in the Black and Tans’, Chapter 2 of *Balfour’s Shadow: A Century of British Support for Zionism and Israel*, Pluto Press, London, 2017, pp 21–22



Notes for a Cannon, 2016, (Palestine cluster), installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, 2016, photo: Denis Mortell

17 Ibid, p 22

18 Richard Cahill, 'The Image of the "Black and Tans" in late Mandate Palestine', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 40, 2009, p 50; http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/40_Black_and_Tans_10.pdf, accessed 10 September 2019

19 Richard Cahill, ' "Going Berserk": "Black and Tans" in Palestine', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 38, 2009, p 66; http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/38_Going_Berserk_2.pdf, consulted 10 September 2019

20 Ibid, p 64. Cahill focuses on the career of one unabashedly brutal former Black and Tan, Douglas Duff, whose several memoirs seem to make no bones about parading his brutality.

21 Ibid, p 65

Palestine. A Home Office paper, for example, drew attention to how the two forces were centralised and how the rules on disciplinary proceedings and on deploying extra police in 'disturbed or dangerous districts' in Palestine 'correspond with Irish practice'.¹⁷

It underscores the connection made in the colonial mind between its various unruly subject populations: as one historian of the Tans in Palestine puts it, 'an analogy between the "Black and Tans" in Ireland and the situation in Palestine held the following two parallels: The Arab Palestinians, resisting the colonization of their land, were equated to the Irish; the "Black and Tans" in Palestine were equated to the colonial powers, the Zionists aided by the British.'¹⁸ Inevitably, along with that analogy, came the Tans' notorious brutality. As Richard Cahill puts it, 'They were prone to controlling the situation through force and taking decisive, often brutal action.'¹⁹ Apart from 'going berserk' in baton-wielding riot control, they introduced torture techniques like waterboarding and 'suspension', techniques that have gained an especially malevolent reputation in recent years.²⁰ Though the Palestine gendarmerie was dissolved within four years of its deployment, numerous members of that force continued to be active in the British Palestinian police forces. By 1943, the majority of district commander positions in Palestine were filled by former 'Black and Tans'.²¹ As another historian of the policing of Palestine argues, 'the transfer of RIC officers and men to the colonial police services

in the aftermath of the force's disbandment led to the concurrent transmission of an "Irish" ethos with regard to policing procedure and practice, particularly in relation to counterinsurgency'.²² And while the relative calm of Mandate Palestine in that period meant that the Tans' reputed brutality may not have been exercised by the Gendarmerie, the later uprisings of 1928–1929 and 1936–1939 seem to have brought older tactics, forged in Ireland, fully into play, resulting in 'what has been described as a "systematic, systemic, officially sanctioned policy of destruction, punishment, reprisal and brutality" by the British military and police which was immediately compared to that which had prevailed in Ireland fifteen years earlier'.²³

Looking back along *Notes for a Cannon* through the lens of this photograph and with this history of policing in Ireland and Palestine in mind throws into new relief the tissue of correspondences between Ireland and Palestine that its constellations assemble. One cluster of texts and images juxtaposes Palestinian mothers of political prisoners protesting the death of republican hunger striker Bobby Sands in 1981 with images of a demonstration at Jerusalem's Jaffa Gate during the period of martial law. In their headscarves, the women could as well be mothers of political prisoners demonstrating on the Falls Road in west Belfast, but the resonance of the constellation arises from its bringing to consciousness of a decades-old material link between the policing of Palestine and of Ireland that belies the frequent enough accusation that such assertions as the slogan on this flyer, 'Irish solidarity with the Palestinian People', is facile posturing. It is perhaps no accident that the photo in the poster features women: not only have mothers been central to so many movements against incarceration and disappearances, but the figure of the old woman has appeared as the historian's chosen type for oral culture and for the solidarities that emerge through vernacular memory and association. The old woman is the figure of folklore and myth, the disseminator of counterfactual or misremembered stories, as opposed to the archival sobriety of the disciplinary historian.²⁴ But the lines of solidarity these women affirm prove in fact to be embedded in the circuits of colonial rule and resistance that were once clearly enough registered by British administrators and policemen, if later forgotten. What the transfer of former RIC and Black and Tan officers from Ireland to Palestine underscores is the blurring of the lines between policing and military responses to unrest that characterised both as colonial locations, in contra-distinction to the unarmed civil policing of Britain. Both colonies were subject to extended periods of martial law intended to maintain British control rather than to further their populations' enjoyment of full civil rights or political autonomy. As General Tudor himself remarked of his volunteers, 'they had had to leave Ireland because of the principle of self-determination and were sent to Palestine to resist the Arab attempt at self-determination'.²⁵

The peculiar 'out-of-placeness' of the Limerick Junction photo and its placement in contiguity with *Crossing Surda* thus succeeds in provoking the historical memory of largely forgotten circuits of connection through the Empire while at the same time furnishing a kind of uncanny gateway into the future. British emergency law continued to provide the template for Israel's settler-colonial regime in Palestine even though it had been applied as much to Zionist terrorist organisations like the

22 Seán William Gannon, 'The Formation, Composition, and Conduct of the British Section of the Palestine Gendarmerie, 1922–1926', *The Historical Journal*, vol 56, no 4, December 2013, p 1005

23 Ibid, p 1001. Gannon regards this as an effect of 'situational factors' rather than the character of the men involved, which perhaps underscores the ways in which colonial regimes reproduce themselves in different contexts. James Barker, 'Policing Palestine' in *History Today*, vol 58, no 6, June 2008, p 59, quotes a 1929 letter from Raymond Cafferata, 'a thirty-two-year-old [police] veteran of both the First World War and the 1920–22 Irish Troubles' stationed in Hebron which makes clear how alive the Irish analogy remained: 'Well the old Arab is just about at the end of his small patience and I think he'll start something similar to Ireland – probably first he'll take to shooting up various officials and work up for a big show.'

24 Luke Gibbons discussed this 'feminisation' of the oral transmission of history and its association with myth in an unpublished paper that I cited in 'True Stories: Cinema, History and Gender' in David Lloyd, *Ireland after History*, Cork University Press, Cork, 1999, p 53.

25 Cronin, *Balfour's Shadow*, op cit, p 22



Notes for a Cannon, 2016, (Palestine cluster), installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, 2016, photo: Denis Mortell

26 Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, second edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, pp 154–155

Irgun and the Stern Gang as against Arab Palestinian resistance. As in Northern Ireland, where long-standing colonial Special Powers remained continuously in force after 1922 in order to defend Protestant hegemony, Israel subjected its Palestinian citizens to a regime of martial law from 1948 to 1966, before the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.²⁶ Indeed, at times it can be virtually impossible to tell with certainty whether the location is Palestine or Ireland, so uncannily familiar are some images to the viewer who has experienced either

location.²⁷ That may, perhaps, be the point of the framed sheet of paper to the lower left of the H-Block cluster on which is stencilled simply ‘British Occupation Forces’: dislocated from any specific geographical referent, occupation could be taking place anywhere within the larger imperial frame.

The brooding, anomalous presence of *Crossing Surda* constantly at play in the background of *Notes for a Cannon* serves to activate for the present the largely historical archive that composes this ‘sketchbook’. The clusters of diverse and often jaggedly incompatible materials produce constantly shifting nodes of provisional meaning and continually reconfigure into different possible constellations. They *await* their meaning rather than resuming or conveying a meaning that already informs them. The array of the archive thrown open here operates as a lens into future understanding, in which past connections that have been struck with historical amnesia become charged with a revived potential both to signify and to motivate lines of solidarity. *Notes* thus constitutes a space in which official documentary history is thrown into dialogue with the folk or popular memory that it often disdains at its peril. As Jacques Derrida has observed, the archive as an institution is as much an instrument of forgetting as it is of preserving historical fact: ‘The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name of *arkhē*. But it also *shelters* itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying that it forgets it.’²⁸ This play of archival memory and forgetting, of amnesia and awakening, circulates through *Notes for a Cannon*, often crystallising wittily in images in the penumbra of its core clusters. Thus, for instance, the surprising image of the shield-shaped logo of Drogheda United Football Club appears low down but almost in the very centre of the wall’s array, bearing the star and crescent moon usually associated with Turkey or the Ottoman Empire, but found on the flags of several predominantly Muslim nations. Historical research traces this insignia to King John, who granted the town its Charter in 1210: the star and crescent on the town’s coat of arms recalls his participation in the Crusades, thus linking the city indirectly to Palestine’s long history of military invasions and warfare. Popular memory has, however, found a new meaning in the symbol, which connects it to an anecdote wherein the Ottoman Sultan donated money and supplies to relieve the Irish Famine, thus showing up Queen Victoria’s famously meagre contribution to famine relief. Though historians dismiss the latter story as myth, its popular function is clearly a critique of the failure of the British colonial regime to respond adequately to this demographic catastrophe: folk memory finds new and relevant meaning in this apparently ‘out-of-place’ sign.²⁹ The sign likewise accretes meaning precisely via its circulation through and into new contexts.

In that respect, the Limerick Junction photo is emblematic of the ways in which the archive opens to the future. Its juxtaposition with *Crossing Surda* suddenly endows the place names on the signpost with a new and unanticipated meaning: at the time the photo was taken, neither Ramallah nor Birzeit would have had the dense complex of association that they have gathered since either the Oslo Accords, which made Ramallah the Palestinian Authority’s administrative centre, or since the Second Intifada, during which Birzeit University was closed by the Israeli military as a site of resistance to their occupation. Likewise, Nabi Saleh was not yet the

27 A similar effect of geographical disorientation is occasioned by Jacir’s video installation *New York/Ramallah* (2004–2005), in which it becomes hard to tell whether the small businesses whose interiors are documented are located in Ramallah or in New York.

28 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Eric Prenowitz, trans, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1996, p 2, italics in the original

29 Alison Comyn, ‘President sparks star and crescent debate’, *Drogheda Independent*, 31 March 2010: <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/droghedaindependent/news/president-sparks-star-and-crescent-debate-27144260.html>, accessed 10 September 2019.

village so richly associated with Palestinian non-violent organising against illegal settlement and the family of the imprisoned teenager, Ahd Tamimi. The signpost points not only to spatial destinations but also to historical futures secreted in the unrealised potentialities of its moment and embedded precisely in what it represents: the casual index of military occupation and of the rationalisation and translation of alien space for the purposes of rule and domination. It is a historical sign whose significance only reveals itself once it forms a constellation with the present.

Unknown to itself, the signpost and its jesting association with Limerick Junction point to an already imminent future that will unfold out of the failure of martial law in Palestine to contain the civil conflict between Palestinians and the Zionist immigrants whose arrival was already understood to be the first wave of colonisation. It was, after all, in response to the failure of the existing, predominantly local Palestinian gendarmerie to suppress inter-communal riots in Jerusalem in 1920 that Churchill imported the former Black and Tans. The original photo behind this cropped and mounted image with its jaunty inscription bears the date 22 January 1919.³⁰ It therefore precedes the arrival of the British Gendarmerie even as it unwittingly points to the very place in which the Black and Tans would gain their name: Gearóid Ó hAllmhuirín notes that ‘the term “Black and Tan” was coined by Christopher O’Sullivan, a Limerick journalist, after he saw a group of irregulars – dressed in dark green and khaki – at Limerick Junction railway station in March 1920. O’Sullivan subsequently wrote that they reminded him of hunting dogs called “black and tans” used in Limerick and Tipperary, and the name stuck.’³¹

It is, of course, only in the context of its placement within Jacir’s assemblage that this photo gains the uncanny capacity to open like a narrow gateway into an unfolding future. The work that it does in the installation is expressly counterfactual: it works against the grain of the archive that Derrida terms ‘commandement’, its autarchic institutional power over memory and forgetting. In doing so, it opens to what he terms ‘commencement’, the originating capacity of the *arche*, loosening possibilities from the crypt of official history.³² If the kinds of connections that a work like *Notes for a Cannon* forges between discrete geographical spaces seem improbable or naïve, fanciful or mythical to the historicist imagination, that is at least in part because the disciplinary work of history (in every sense of that Foucaultian term) performs the task of an ideological segmentation of spaces that colonialism always enacts in the material world. Ireland and Palestine are taken to be discrete disciplinary objects, one belonging to the United Kingdom or Europe, the other to the Middle East. It is no accident that Jacir’s work has so often been committed to reworking the spaces that constitute Europe, the Middle East, or the Mediterranean and to doing so by focusing on or creating the seemingly out-of-place artefact: the Arabic place names on the *vaporetti* of Venice; the inclusion of a fragment of a Gazan fishing boat or of Hebron glass in *Via Crucis*; or – as in the sound installation for *Notes for a Cannon* – the sound of the muezzin’s call to prayer resonating over Dublin rooftops. These fragments of displaced material, the fragmentary assemblages and the provisional associations they summon up, counter the systematic segmentation of spaces and populations that is fundamental to colonial rule and historicist procedure. It is as if the constant

30 The unmounted photograph can be viewed at the Matson Photograph Collection in the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, entitled ‘Tell el-Full battlefield, etc. Army signpost’, Call number: LC-M31- B409: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/item/mpc2004000006/PP/>, accessed 11 September 2019.

31 Gearóid Ó hAllmhuirín, *Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, pp 262–263, n 7

32 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, op cit, p 1



Notes for a Cannon, 2016, (Drogheda cluster), installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, 2016, photo: Denis Mortell

experience of out-of-placeness of the exile, the fragmentation of spatial relations that displacement entails, gives rise to a counter-aesthetic that deploys the interplay of displacement and connection to dismantle the boundaries that 'divide and rule'. The common sense of history's disciplinary segmentation of space is here confronted by the uncanny recognition of occluded connections and their resonant possibilities in a process we might term 'rememberment'.

Indeed, this sense of the spatial logic of fragmentation in Jacir's work is no less apposite to the meditation on time, memory and modernity that structures *Notes for a Cannon* as a whole. To the systematic segmentation of space and populations that subserves colonial rule corresponds the imposition of the linear time of modernity, that 'concept of man's historical progress' that, as Walter Benjamin so famously remarked, 'cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through homogeneous, empty time'.³³ To Benjamin's critique of the progressivism of social democracy must be added the critique of a specifically colonialist imagination of historical time that arrays its subjects along a progression no less segmented temporally than are the spaces over which it rules. For while time may be imagined as an abstract and homogeneous space, populations and epochs are distributed and distinguished within it according to the scale of human progress. Along that scale, the colonised lag behind the colonising avatars of modernity: they inhabit a different space of time. Even as they occupy the same geographical space as the coloniser in the same historical moment, the colonised are assigned to an anterior place in temporal development. Accordingly, one of the tasks of colonialism is the modernisation and rationalisation of time within which the colonised will be brought up to date.

If the view back along *Notes for a Cannon* could be said to pass through the 'Limerick Junction' photo, our initial entry to it is dominated by a single, isolated text, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland's order to observe 'Western European Time' throughout Ireland, as of 1 October 1916. The Lord Lieutenant's order followed on the passage of the Time (Ireland) Act in September 1916 that effectively 'assimilated', as the Bill proposed, 'the Time adopted for use in Ireland to that adopted for use in Great Britain', thus establishing a uniform temporal regime throughout the United Kingdom. The abolition of Dublin Time, based on the time at Dunsink Observatory on the east coast, which had hitherto prevailed in Ireland, and its replacement by Greenwich Mean Time, meant that in the early hours of 1 October 1916, all Irish clocks would be put forward thirty-five minutes. As Luke Gibbons has detailed, the passage of this Act met with considerable criticism and resistance at the time. Its passage provocatively followed hard on the events of Easter 1916 and on the executions of its leaders, culminating in Roger Casement's hanging in August 1916, and it was projected to cause considerable inconvenience to Irish farmers 'who had to rise almost an hour and a half earlier to facilitate their British working-class counterparts'.³⁴ As one Rev C Mangan expostulated, with a perhaps unwitting pun:

The whole thing is utter retrogression... It is due to no honest desire to benefit any Irish interest, but rather to the insufferable arrogance of the ruling caste in England and its complacent garrison in Ireland. There is a

33 Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', op cit, pp 394–395

34 Luke Gibbons, *Joyce's Ghosts: Ireland, Modernism, and Memory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2015, pp 180–181

TIME (Ireland) ACT, 1916.

On and after SUNDAY, the 1st OCTOBER, 1916, Western European Time will be observed throughout Ireland. All clocks and watches should be put back 35 minutes during the night 30th SEPTEMBER--1st OCTOBER.

The proper time to make the change is 3 a.m. Summer Time and the correction to the nearest second is 34 minutes 39 seconds.

BY ORDER OF THE LORD LIEUTENANT.

DUBLIN CASTLE,
12th September, 1916.

10128 (9-1). S. 11.500. 916. H.A. Printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office, by ALEX. THOM & CO., Limited, Dublin.



Notes for a Cannon, 2016, ('Jaffa Gate'), installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art Dublin, 2016, photo: Denis Mortell

suspicion that it was motivated by a desire to check the national sentiment which the people might have in distinct Irish time.³⁵

Or, as another commentator remarked, 'an Irish sun was replaced by an English sun'.³⁶

Jacir's *Notes for a Cannon* captures both the Act itself and the resentments this temporal 'Act of Union' caused economically in a constellation of materials that counterpoints the 'H-Block cluster' to its lower right. Alongside snippets of the parliamentary Bill, a pair of newspaper clippings aligns a report on the Act and a letter criticising its effects with an article on a petition for the return of Casement's body. But this complex of materials around the abolition of Irish time is not the only index of the colonial rationalisation of time that *Notes for a Cannon* presents. The Time (Ireland) Act could be seen as the symbolic culmination of successive efforts by the British state to introduce modernising institutions and infrastructures into Ireland, even if – as Gibbons argues – its ostensible rationale was simply to facilitate British shipping timetables. At a corresponding moment, and as it came under British rule, Palestine also was subject to processes of colonial modernisation and temporal integration. Already impacted by the *Tanzimât*, the Ottoman drive to modernising reforms throughout its empire in the mid-nineteenth century, from 1917 onwards Palestine became subject at once to British and Zionist projects of modernisation. As Ilan Pappé has shown, from agricultural

³⁵ Ibid, p 181

³⁶ Ibid, p 180

to educational policy, the British pursued ‘limited modernisation’ in order to forestall ‘the dangerous leap forward that had produced anti-British nationalism in Egypt and India’.³⁷ Infrastructural investments in transportation and communications – doubtless including the kinds of signposting captured in the Limerick Junction photo – promised to integrate Palestine more fully into the global economy for which, in fact, it had always been a crucial corridor along the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁸ But this was a very specific mode of modernisation imposed in the interests of colonial rule, a process of which Palestinians were the objects rather than the subjects, particularly in the context of accelerating Zionist colonisation with its parallel and racially exclusionary modernising project that aimed at settling the land while displacing its population. As Pappé tersely notes, ‘The indigenous population would either be modernised for its own good or make way for the newcomers and their ideas.’³⁹ It was thus a process of modernisation oblivious if not antagonistic to alternative temporalities or even to alternative imaginaries of modernity. Progressive historicism, in Benjamin’s sense, likewise obscures such alternatives, occluding subaltern possibilities that are, as Pappé puts it, ‘not valid subject matter for historians unless they were, or until they are, modernized’.⁴⁰

To the fragments on the Time (Ireland) Act Jacir juxtaposes a no less resonant cluster of images. A famous photo, much reproduced elsewhere in histories of the Palestine campaign, shows General Allenby entering Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate in November 1917 after its capture from Ottoman forces. In the photograph, the ancient stone gate in the city wall is surmounted by a clock tower. Soon afterwards, however, the clock tower was removed under circumstances explained by a text pasted adjacent to a cluster of photos of the old Jaffa Gate to the right of the Time Act cluster:

The famous Clock Tower at the Jaffa Gate, in Jerusalem, has been taken down on the grounds that it was ugly and not in keeping with the ancient wall. It was put up in 1907, and boasted of a fine timepiece, giving both European and Arabic times... The tower was removed at the instigation of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, which was founded by Sir Ronald Storrs, the Present Governor of the Holy City, some eighteen months ago, and whose object is ‘to preserve the ancient monuments, encourage technical education, plant trees, and in general beautify the ancient and historic city of Jerusalem.’⁴¹

An index of Ottoman modernising efforts, the clock tower – in contrast to British rationalisation of time in Ireland – displayed European standard time on its western and eastern faces and local time in Arabic on its northern and southern ones. It was, in other words, capable of accommodating distinct modes of measuring time in the same frame rather than seeking to erase and overcome discrete but adjacent temporal customs. Its removal, while performed in the name of aesthetic consistency, not only erased from the old walls of Jerusalem the trace of an alternative vision of modernisation capable of embracing simultaneously two ‘allochronic’ systems of marking daily time, but also imposed a historicist imagination of the city itself. Seeking to ‘restore’ the ancient walls of the city – which in fact dated only to the sixteenth century – required the ‘preservation’ of Jerusalem as in appearance a non-modern site, its ancientness locating it in a

37 Pappé, *Modern Palestine*, op cit, p 74. Chapter 1 of this work describes the impact of Ottoman reforms on Palestine.

38 Ibid, p 76. On Palestine’s historical integration with West Asia and Africa, see Shihade, ‘The Place of Israel in Asia’, op cit.

39 Ibid, p 32

40 Ibid, p 6

41 Jacir, *Notes for a Cannon*, citing Harold J Shepstone, ‘Restoring the Walls of Jerusalem’, *The Graphic*, 19 April 1924, p 577. According to Simon Goldhill, in *Jerusalem: City of Longing*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008, p 186: ‘It was erected by Sultan Abdul Hamid II as an icon of municipal modernization in 1907. R. A.S. McAlister, the archaeologist who was director of excavations for the Palestine Exploration fund, stormed that the gate “has been utterly spoilt by the erection above of an ultra-hideous clock-tower, which is in itself a perfect eye-sore.”’

perpetual past along the homogeneous lines of progressive history.⁴² The uneven coequality of past and present, ancient and modern, with their different time frames, could not be acknowledged any more than could the vista of the gradual accretion of incompatible but co-existing architectural styles. No more could the Western project of aesthetic modernisation accept the co-existence within the same frame of two distinct modes of measuring time, a possibility not only accepted but actually lived in the daily experience of the city's residents.

Notes for a Cannon continually underscores the centrality to colonial projects of the rationalisation both of time and of aesthetic consistency. Another motif within the installation incorporates Jacir's own 'found' video footage from 1999 of a similar Ottoman-era clock tower in Akka (Acre), which in 2001 underwent 'restoration' so that the clock faces would include Hebrew lettering, thus effacing the history of this predominantly Arab city prior to Zionist colonisation and its ongoing efforts to 'Judaize' historic Palestine. Jacir's accidental filming of this clock tower and later rediscovery of it in her footage underscores the contingency of memory – both its dependence on uncertain survival and its intimate relation to unofficial spaces and informal archives. In this respect, the preservation of the image of the Akka clock tower resembles the focus in her work *ex libris* that retains not just the documentary evidence of stolen books, but more importantly the marks of human presence on those books' pages, in all their arbitrary and individuating contingency. But it also sheds oblique light on the paradoxical nature of the Zionist project, in its simultaneous effort to 'backdate' the Jewish presence in Palestine, as if to establish historical continuity and tradition, while at the same time seeking to integrate Israel into the global system of modern and modernising states. Crucial to this project, as it was to British modernising projects in Ireland, was the occlusion of the awkward and incompatible co-existence of alternative temporalities and memories. Israel had to be represented both as a modern nation and, in keeping with the 'Janus-faced' temporality of modern European nationalisms, as stretching back in an unbroken arc to an ancient Hebrew past.⁴³ The persistence of the Palestinian presence, of another history and memory occupying the same space, is an problematic obstacle to that imaginary construction of the nation: neither time nor space are homogeneous or empty, but are rifted with slippage, incommensurability and difference.

It is precisely this appearance of the non-identity of times and spaces that Jacir foregrounds in *Notes for a Cannon*. As she described the project, 'The piece has many facets, but it's essentially an exploration into slippages of and standardization of time, as well as time-keeping practices in public space. It explores the ways in which various times are lived and experienced simultaneously...'.⁴⁴ The installation, however, does not create the illusion of simultaneity in either space or time. Despite the transfers and correspondences that link Palestine and Ireland in historical fact as in commensurate political imaginations, disjunction in time and space remains at the core of the work. Ireland and Palestine may both have undergone the rationalisation of time under British rule, but at slightly staggered times; both may have undergone colonial occupation and policing, with the deliberate transfer of techniques and tactics back and forth within the logics of twentieth-century counter-insurgency, but never quite at the same time; and political imprisonment and resistance may be in the

42 Architect Eyal Weizman comments on the subsequent fetishisation of 'Jerusalem Stone' in the construction of Jerusalem and other Israeli cities, producing façades intended to present a fake image of local materials and continuity with ancient sites. Interestingly, this urban planning policy was initiated early in the British Mandate by the same Ronald Storrs as decreed the removal of the Ottoman clock tower from Jerusalem's ancient walls. See Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, Verso, London, 2007, pp 28–37.

43 I borrow the term from Tom Nairn's famous usage, first introduced in 'The Modern Janus', Chapter 9 of *The Break-Up of Britain*, New Left Books, London, 1977.

44 Lara Atallah, Interview with Emily Jacir, *Artforum*, 13 December 2016: <https://www.artforum.com/interviews/emily-jacir-on-her-exhibition-at-imma-in-dublin-65253>, accessed 10 September 2019

historical and contemporary experience of both, but never in exactly the same regimes or with the same rhythms. Again, connections among the colonised that emerge from the circuits of colonial power are not immediately given but are discovered across time and space in the non-synchronic rhythms of their unfolding.

This sense of temporal slippage and spatial displacement was dramatically performed in the sound installation that Jacir played out of the clock tower in the courtyard of the Kilmainham Royal Hospital in which IMMA is housed and which so strikingly rhymed with the clock towers in the visual installation inside. The sound installation was no less disjunctive in its play with incompatible systems of time measurement and three distinct kinds of sound. At noon, Dublin Time, the clock struck twelve times, signalling a noontide thirty-five minutes out of synch with what is now standard Irish time; and at noon Greenwich Mean Time, a single cannon shot rang out, by all accounts troubling the neighbourhood with anxious associations. Perhaps most perplexing of all to Dublin ears was the sound of the muezzin's call to prayer, intoned every day at noon *alla turca*. An Ottoman system of measuring time according to the setting and rising of the sun (sunset being zero hours and sunrise twelve hours), time *alla turca* divides the day into twelve-hour periods whose actual duration varies with the season. Thus not only was the Muslim call to prayer perceived as culturally out of place in the context of Kilmainham, its timing gradually shifted in relation to both Dublin Time and GMT across the duration of the installation. The sounds in the installation were thus all, to varying degrees, out of place and out of time while at the same time marking correspondences between two divergent systems of recording of the hours of the day that were equally displaced by a colonial imposition of standardised time.

The governing paradox of *Notes for a Cannon* is, accordingly, its sustained meditation on the very notion of 'site specificity' that determines both its components and their arrangement or constellations. These point towards a fundamentally ethical or redemptive aesthetic that is at play in this installation as across Jacir's work as a whole. Confronted as a very condition of being and working as a Palestinian, displaced and cut off from continuity of self and history by a settler-colonial segmentation of both space and time, by Israel's control of movement and space and by its destruction or expropriation of Palestinian archives and records, Jacir constantly works with the phenomena of temporal and spatial out-of-placeness. To do so, however, does not imply a desire to make whole what has been sundered or mutilated, a desire for the restoration of wholeness and continuity that has always impelled the aesthetic as well as the political practice of nationalism in its specular response to colonialism and its state-oriented reliance on a universal form of history and a uniform extension over space. One might say, to the contrary, that for Palestinians, the problem is precisely to have been subordinated and occupied by a state whose nationalist ideology, Zionism, specifically sought to reterritorialise the Jewish diaspora, insisting on its historical continuity as a nation and on the homogeneity of the territorial space it occupies, as on the integrity of the people and that geographical site. The Zionist enterprise, played out at the expense of the indigenous people of the region, has sought to constitute a unified territorial space and a unitary 'Jewish state for a Jewish people' through the Judaisation of Palestine,

the renaming and settlement of the land, and the consequent displacement and segmentation of Palestinians who, as an alien presence, must be barred from moving freely through that territory. Zionism, as an extreme instance of settler nationalism, offers neither an aesthetic nor a political model for any vision of emancipation or decolonisation, but, on the contrary, powerfully exemplifies the limits of any project predicated on the spatio-temporal formations of modernity on which the nation and the state's sovereignty are grounded.

For all that it acknowledges and embodies what T J Demos has called the 'ravaging experience, resulting even in a form of mutilation' that is exile and displacement, Jacir's work as a whole embraces and explores an aesthetic of fragmentation and displacement, insisting always on what we might term a logic of 'out-of-placeness', operating both in space and time.⁴⁵ This aesthetic commitment, which is determined by the historical condition of being Palestinian, whether in the diaspora or under the different constraints of occupation, siege or second-class citizenship, is also an ethical commitment to the imagination of alternative possibilities for survival or living on, in and through damage.⁴⁶ Fragmentation may be the consequence of a violently inflicted displacement but it is not for all that only the occasion of mutilation and mourning. The fragmentary and the discontinuous may, indeed, be the form in which an alternative subaltern ethic of persistence and living in common is realised. Antonio Gramsci in *The Prison Notebooks* remarks that subaltern histories appear 'episodic and fragmentary' and that they do so until such times as the subaltern classes attain to dominance and hegemony over the state. But if it is the case that only the hegemon can be assured of continuity, and only at the price of an ever-anxious and unstable domination of others, then those 'episodic and fragmentary' formations offer the condition for alternative and non-sovereign modes of relation and solidarity. The provisional and occasional lines of solidarity that flash through the constellations of material in *Notes for a Cannon* and that link Palestine and Ireland in both their histories and their struggles do not depend on any homogeneity or even comparability of their experiences or of their cultural and political desires and ends. Rather, it is precisely where the homogenising drive of colonial modernisation appears out of kilter with the particular and non-commensurable difference of the colonised that solidarity sparks into connection. The disjunctive assemblage of *Notes for a Cannon*, aligning fragments out of place and out of time, awakens through its form as in its diverse contents the imagination of a commonality in difference. In this radical act of archival *commencement*, the work redeems the fragments that compose it, blasting them, to paraphrase Benjamin once more,⁴⁷ out of the continuum of historical defeat and releasing from them the unexhausted potential for resistance they preserve in their unsubsumed particularity.

45 T J Demos, 'Desire in Diaspora: Emily Jacir', March 2017. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, <https://www.sfmoma.org/essay/desire-diaspora-emily-jacir/>, accessed 10 September 2019. (This essay was first published in *Art Journal*, vol 62, no 4, winter 2003, pp 68–78.) My own sense of Jacir's aesthetic practice of out-of-placeness is in part suggested by the Brazilian critic Roberto Schwartz's essay 'Misplaced Ideas: Literature and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil', which argues that the disjunctiveness of the concepts of modernity circulating in Brazil with its non-modern social forms leads to a distinctive and critical aesthetic of the 'improper'. The title of the essay in Portuguese, *Ideas fora de lugar*, might more literally be translated as 'ideas out of place'. See Roberto Schwarz, 'Misplaced Ideas: Literature and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil' in John Gledson, ed, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, Verso, London, 1992, pp 19–32.

46 I have explored the practices of living on, in and through damage in the Irish context more fully in *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity 1800–2000: The Transformation of Oral Space*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011.

47 Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', op cit, p 396