Remote Control:
Distance in Two Works by Emily Jacir and Wafaa Bilal

Kerr Houston

As a part of her 2001-3 project *Where We Come From*, the Palestinian-American artist Emily Jacir asked dozens of Palestinian exiles and children of Palestinian refugees a simple question: "If I could do anything for you, anywhere in Palestine, what would it be?" Able to travel relatively freely within Israel due to her American passport, Jacir then executed the wishes of several respondents, recording her performances in photographs and videos, which she exhibited alongside transcriptions of the requests and brief personal histories of the exiles (Figure 1). "Drink the water," ran one appeal, put forward by a woman named Omayma, "in my parents' village" – and, adjacent, viewers saw an image of a glassful of water, tilted towards the camera. "Go to Haifa's beach at the moment of the first light," read another request, made by a man named Mohannad, in Riyadh, "take a deep breath and light a candle in honor of all those who gave their lives for Palestine." To the right, the beach appeared, in early morning blues, on a small video screen.

Four years later, in May and June of 2007, the Iraqi-American artist Wafaa Bilal took up residence in a Chicago art gallery, in a project called *Domestic Tension*. Subsisting on donated food and drink, Bilal lived for thirty days in a simulated bedroom/office space that was enclosed in transparent walls. Visible to gallery visitors, the space was also outfitted with computers and a streaming webcam, and visitors to Bilal's website could control the camera and periodically interact with him through an online chatroom or view videos that he posted on Youtube. Or they could attempt to shoot him,

Figure 1. Emily Jacir, *Where We Come From* (detail), 2001-3.
PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE RHODES

by using a remote-controlled paintball gun (Figure 2). By the twentieth day, the rifle-sized gun had been fired roughly 40,000 times, and Bilal – who wore protective goggles and who left the chamber for roughly four hours a day to sleep and shower – had been hit countless times and suffered partial hearing loss. At the piece's conclusion, on June 4, his computer records showed that over 62,000 users from 128 countries had shot at least one paintball.
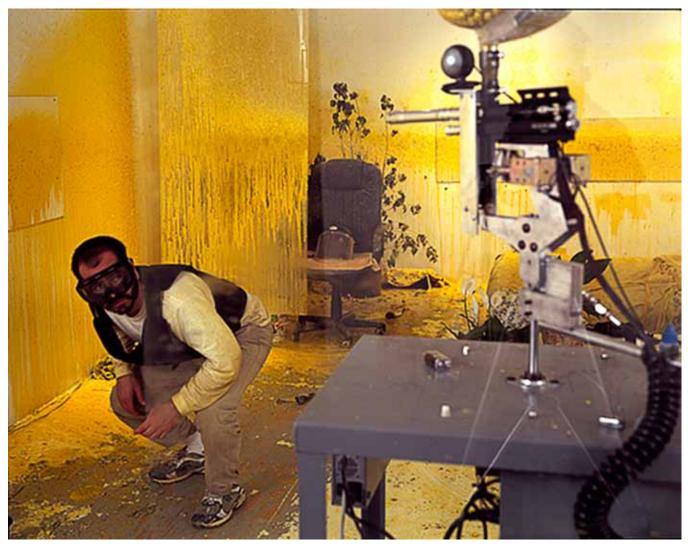
Both of these works have generated broad interest. *Where We Come From* was featured prominently in a 2003 essay in *Art Journal* by T.J. Demos, and was acquired in 2008 by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.[1] *Domestic Tension*, in turn, was discussed in a May 25, 2007 *Newsweek* article, which called it "a breathtaking work of political art," and a week later in a radio essay on NPR's *All Things Considered*; more recently, it was included in *Newvision*, the valuable 2009 overview of recent Arab art.[2] In the process, conventional interpretations involving the works took shape. *Where We Come From* has generally been seen as a temporary gesture towards linking a diaspora and its homeland that nevertheless also acknowledges the futility of mere gestures in creating such a link.[3] The chasms that characterize the experience of Palestinian exiles, in other words, are not so easily bridged. Bilal's piece, in the meantime, has been repeatedly read as bridging a different sort of distance. Built around a conflation of technology and physical pain, *Domestic Tension* linked the disembodied online community to the pocked body of the artist – and, in the process, highlighted the real but often overlooked connection between American body politic and distant Iraqi war victims.[4]

In this article, I largely accept such interpretations. But I also argue that the effects and nuances of both pieces can be more fully gleaned through a comparison of the two and through a consideration of their rather different attitudes towards remote control. At root, the projects shared a basic structure: in both, the artist created a scenario, or a delimited set of possibilities, in which a group of individuals participated at a distance or remotely by having their wishes enacted in a physically inaccessible environment. Both pieces, too, accommodated an audience: visitors to the gallery in which each work was installed could observe the results of the arrangement without directly participating in the piece's central, active process. Finally, each project placed the artist in the very environment – Palestine; a cell – that was inaccessible to the project's participants and audience. The artist thus became a remote figure, who was nevertheless subject to the desires of participants: the subject, that is, of remote control. Of course, the term remote control can mean different

things in different contexts, for remoteness, after all, is relative – and these two pieces surely involved different contexts, in evoking contested Palestine and war-torn Iraq. As a result, one could fairly say that distance *meant* differently in the two works. But how, exactly? A consideration of the inflections of remote control, and of a range of relevant precedents and parallels, can help to answer such a question.

Travelers often travel in the footsteps of earlier travelers. And yet it has never been noted, in relation to Jacir's project, that the idea of one person performing an activity in Palestine on behalf of a second is in fact a very old one. As early as the 1100s, Europeans who were unable, due to poor health, to travel occasionally hired surrogate pilgrims to visit holy sites, including Jerusalem; in theory, the benefits of the visit would then transfer to the underwriter of the trip. By the 1400s, attitudes towards such proxy pilgrimages had grown increasingly permissive, and even fully healthy individuals paid travelers to execute specific activities while in the Holy Land.[5] In around 1413, for instance, Margery Kempe received 26s 8d from the bishop of Lincoln, along with a directive that she was to "buy her clothes with [the money] and to pray for him in Palestine."[6] Such a stipulation and its rendering in direct, contractual terms neatly anticipate the request, made by of one of the Palestinians in Jacir's project, that she "go to my mother's grave in Jerusalem on her birthday and put flowers and pray." In a way, Jacir's project had a clear structural precedent in the actions of earlier surrogate pilgrims.

Given that many of the Palestinians who made requests of Jacir were Muslim, it is also worth pointing out that the practice of proxy travel has a relatively long history in Islam, which has accepted the notion of surrogate pilgrimage in extreme cases.[7] A hadith (a report of Muhammad's deeds or words) recorded in the ninth century states that the Prophet was asked by a woman if she might perform the *hajj* on her father's behalf, as he was too old to ride his horse safely; Muhammad reportedly gave his consent.[8] Travelers to Mecca have also performed the hajj on behalf of those in dire health or extreme poverty. But perhaps most relevant, here, is the practice of allowing proxy *hajjis* to act on behalf of those imprisoned for life. In the 1990s, a Muslim condemned to five life sentences in a New York prison asked that a friend be allowed to perform the *hajj* on his behalf; Sheikh Abd al'Aziz bin Baz, a Saudi theologian, determined that such a proxy pilgrimage was in fact permissible.[9] Prison walls or illness may arrest the movements of individuals, but in both cases surrogate travel represents a partial

Figure 2. Wafaa Bilal, *Domestic Tension*, 2007.

transcendence of those boundaries. Proxy seemingly dissolves distance.

On a simple, conceptual level, Jacir's *Where We Come From* seems comparable to these antecedents: the artist is an agent making a meaningful journey on behalf of another. And we can stretch the analogy even further, for in several cases the requests that Jacir received were explicitly religious, and involved conventional pilgrimage destinations. Take, for instance, the stated wish that she

> Go to Jerusalem and light a candle on the grave of Christ in the Holy Sepulcher Church and then go to al-Aqsa Mosque and pray to God to ease the pressure and help those who are needy in both places.

In executing such a request, Jacir literally walked in the footsteps of Kempe, who had once stood before the same grave, also by candlelight.[10] But Jacir's movements recall the actions of pilgrims in less obvious ways, as well. For centuries, *hajjis* have bought shrouds in

Mecca, soaked them in the waters of Zamzam, and subsequently carried them home, distributing them to family and friends.[11] Jacir, in turn, was asked by a Palestinian mother (whom she had visited at the request of the woman's son) to carry two handfuls of sweets back to her son. Might the handfuls of sweets carried back from the homeland be imbued, like the shrouds saturated in the well water of Mecca, with some transitive power, as well? Certainly, their tangibility mattered: unlike the disembodied images of olive trees and Jaffa oranges that have long haunted Palestinian poetry as symbols of the lost homeland, the sweets that she bore were real and could be eaten. They were proofs of the efficacy of remote control and of the continued existence of life across the border.

In this light, the formal organization of Jacir's work is also worth considering closely. In featuring photographs of her enactments of requests, *Where We Come From*

suggested a sort of wish fulfillment: the open nature of each request, transcribed in English and Arabic, was implicitly completed by the adjacent photograph, which offered an assurance that Jacir had completed her mission. As Rosalind Krauss once put it, photography is "the registration of sheer physical presence": Jacir had actually been *there*.[12] Moreover, like all photographs, Jacir's were objects derived from plates that had been struck by the light of the various sites that she visited. In André Bazin's words, every photograph inevitably "shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model."[13] Jacir's photographs, then, were not merely images of Jaffa, and Bayt Lahia, and Jerusalem; rather, like saturated shrouds brought back from Mecca, they *were*, in a sense, those sites.

But only in a sense. Interpreted from other angles, Jacir's photographs also made viewers aware of the firm distance between the exiled and their homeland. We might think here of a passage from "The Exile," by the Palestinian poet Salem Jubran:

> The sun seeps through barbed borders
> Unheeded by the watchful squads…
> But as for me, your ousted son,
> My native land,
> Between my eyes and your skies
> Walls of the border stand.[14]

Palestinian light strikes Jubran's eyes – but only reminds him, finally, of the fact that he is an outsider, looking in. Like photographs, which are created using the light of a site but which may remind their viewer of the fact that that light no longer exists, his exile from Palestine allows him to look, longingly, across the border – but also then reminds him of the distance between him and his homeland. Views from a distance, or objects brought back from afar, are always shot through with that distance. Consequently, by a similar logic, one's surrogate is never, in the end, one's self: Jacir may go to Gaza, as in one request, and eat *sayadiyeh*, but the experience is never wholly transferable.[15] In fact, such action by proxy is inevitably self-undermining, for a proxy always points to the need for the proxy. Thus, if Jacir is anything like a proxy pilgrim – and she is, as we have seen – then her actions recall, like proxy travel, the grave conditions that necessitated such an arrangement. That is, those Palestinians on whose behalf Jacir executed proxy pilgrimages can never be fulfilled through her travels, for by analogy they are ill, impoverished, or incarcerated. And later viewers of Jacir's work, on display in San Francisco? They, too, remain outside Palestine. Jacir's piece does not preclude

a pleasure obtained through proxy travel (indeed, it offers relatively direct pleasures), but it also calls to mind the limitations of such a practice.

The appeal of the homeland and the distance at which it stands: meaningfully, the push and pull between these concepts relates neatly to a tension central to the formation of Palestinian community. On the one hand, the homeland has occupied a central place in the thoughts of exiled Palestinians since the *nakba*, or Israeli victory, of 1948: as Gannit Ankori has shown, images of a female figure symbolizing the motherland are common in Palestinian art and poetry.[16] Similarly, Jacir's use of the first person in her title – *Where We Come From* – suggests a coherent *we* that is to be understood in relation to *al-Ard*, the land to which all Palestinians trace their roots. The community is defined in terms of a common site. But at the same time, as Edward Said has argued, the identity of Palestinian refugees is predicated on a shared sense of the loss of that homeland. Moreover, in Said's view, this sense is often accompanied by a largely oppositional sentiment:

> The Palestinians also know that their own sense of national identity has been nourished in the exile milieu, where everyone not a blood-brother or sister is an enemy, where every sympathizer is an agent of some unfriendly power…[17]

Identity, then, is forged through a shared aspiration, a shared experience, and a shared sense of social isolation. Consequently, Jacir's *we* is not universal; it is comprised, rather, of exiles who live in the United States, or Egypt, or Saudi Arabia, but see themselves as outsiders in their current milieus. Even here, though, there are further complexities, for the binding idea of a return to Palestine is not monolithic. Rather, as Helena Lindholm Schulz showed in her study of the Palestinian diaspora, the meanings associated with return are inevitably varied and differentiated – a fact only reinforced by the varied and even idiosyncratic requests made of Jacir.[18] *We come from*, Jacir's piece seems to say, a common territory, but also from dozens of particular points of view.

All of which only points, again, to the limitations of proxy, or surrogate, travel. How can any one traveler, no matter how patient, ever enact the ideas of an entire community? How can vicarious return ever substitute for the common dream of an actual return, or erase the common sense of a lost land? It cannot. And in fact it might even be argued that any acceptance of the effectiveness of proxy or surrogate travel is, in certain Palestinian contexts, not merely ineffectual but actually defeatist. As Wakim Wakim, an official of the Palestinian Committee for the Rights of the Internally Displaced

in Israel, put it in May of 2011, "it is impossible to have real peace in the area without the return of all the Palestinian refugees."[19] He did not mean, of course, their proxy return. Proxy travel may be all that is possible, given the current circumstances. But many Palestinians have dedicated themselves to combating those very circumstances, instead of accepting a partial or surrogate return. They want, in short, to be able to exercise a choice about where they live, an individual control over their destiny.[20] Ultimately, then, Jacir's project may be seen as an attempt to offer positive form to the ontologically negative conditions of exile and displacement, but it also implies the limits of its own strategy.[21] Remote control is not, in the end, full control.

Bilal's project, too, relied centrally upon a brand of remote control, as users around the world swiveled the webcam and discharged the paintball gun in the artist's cell. Granted, such an arrangement differed significantly from the sort of remote control arranged by Jacir: in Bilal's project, the artist was no longer the direct object of remote control (although in fact a number of users did attempt to affect Bilal's movements, using the online chatroom to complain when he retreated out of the line of fire). Granted, too, certain aspects of *Domestic Tension* were characterized by neither remoteness nor control: gallery visitors, for instance, could only watch as Bilal skirted paintballs on the other side of the cell wall. Nonetheless, Bilal himself seems to have viewed his project – which he considered titling *Shoot an Iraqi* – largely in relation to the remotely controlled weapon: the project, at its heart, was akin to an online shooting gallery.

Viewed thus, *Domestic Tension* snaps into a certain focus. Bilal's piece could be fairly compared, I think, to a range of precedents – to Joseph Bueys' *I Like America and America Likes Me*, for instance, in which Beuys spent three days in a room with a coyote, or to Chris Burden's *Shoot*, in which the artist had himself shot in the arm. But perhaps no precedent is as relevant as the common first-person shooter video game, whose format was echoed in Bilal's project in several ways.[22] For one thing, Bilal's work conflated, like any video game, the acts of viewing and participation: the online users who controlled the paintball gun were simultaneously actors in, and viewers of, the piece. Or, as the video game theorist Mark Wolf once wrote,

> Rather than merely watching the actions of the main character, as we would in a film, with every outcome of events predetermined when we enter the theater… we can participate in and alter the events in the game's diegetic world.[23]

Moreover, participants in Bilal's project altered the events in that diegetic world by firing a gun – an action that also stands at the heart of first-person best-sellers such as *Doom*, *Halo*, and 2007's *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*. And, finally, they could only control that weapon through the interface of a video monitor: gun and target, after all, were never more than collections of pixels. The gun was never held in the hands; the shooting, as in a video game, always occurred *elsewhere*.

Bilal certainly thought of his work in such terms. "I want it," he said of the online aspect of his piece, "to be video game-like."[24] At the same time, though, he also seems to have had two other uses of remote technology in mind. The idea for *Domestic Tension*, he has said, came to him after he saw an interview with an American soldier who had fired remote-controlled missiles into Iraq while seated in a Colorado military base.[25] Such moments were actually rather common in 2007, as American military use of unmanned stations and drones was on the rise.[26] Even as evolving technologies facilitated the remote control of devices in war zones, though, they also shaped civilian experience of those war zones. The Gulf War of 1991 is often cited by media theorists as a turning point in the civilian American experience of warfare, as it generated an unprecedented genre of television coverage. Military violence subsequently became widely known through digital images, and, like video game violence, it was often experienced virtually, and was implicitly remote. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the term, "Nintendo warfare," became common in military circles in 1991.[27] Web-based video-sharing sites only extended, in subsequent years, the marriage of warfare and broadcast technology.

By evoking video games, military technologies, and televised warfare, Bilal managed to highlight, in turn, some of their common features. For example, the individuals who were responsible for the violence done to Bilal's body and cell were immune, themselves, to the threat of violence: on the far end of an Internet connection, they shot, but never withstood enemy fire. So, too, with players of any first-person shooter: indeed, as Andreas Gregersen and Torben Grodal once pointed out, in a discussion of an emerging technology often called embodied interaction, video games have always been "fundamentally asymmetric" in terms of physical relations.[28] One can throw a pixelated grenade, or fire a digital flamethrower, but there is, in the end, no possibility of full reciprocity: the user of such technology remains, in the end, untouched. Similarly, wars fought remotely have become an increasingly common means of minimizing the risk of casualties.[29] The soldier on a base in remote Colorado was well beyond the reach of Iraqi

fire. Or perhaps we could state this even more broadly, for in a sense *any* military acts on behalf of civilians who are thus largely freed of the risk of direct harm.[30] The trigger is pulled without consequence for the citizen at home.

It is often also pulled, we might add, without concern for those shot. For the most part, video games and remote military technologies tend to minimize concern for the target. In video games, of course, this is perhaps natural, for players do no actual physical harm to enemies; their targets are disembodied icons or avatars. By contrast, military strikes do inflict actual pain and even death, and it has often been observed that the growing reliance upon remote technologies by the military represses or understates those consequences. In an essay on the Gulf War, for instance, Victor Caldarola once referred to the "emotionally remote precision-bomb videos produced by allied Central Command… [which often] obscure such sensitive issues as Iraqi casualties."[31] Due to such images, the situation in Iraq was sanitized; as Bilal himself has noted, "we don't see the mutilated bodies or the toll on the ground."[32] Remoteness thus fosters a sense of violence without consequence, and can produce, in turn, a simplified and casually violent world view.[33]

Here, though, the apparent analogies between Bilal's project and the constellation of video games and military technologies begin to unravel. For, after all, *Domestic Tension* was *not* simply a video game: instead of shooting at a mere icon, users were aiming at a living person. Moreover, that person's reactions to being hit (or missed) were clearly visible: the toll on the ground, one might say, was on display, to live and remote viewers. The use of paintballs – rather than, say, foam pellets – only heightened this visibility, as Bilal's cell and body became brightly marked records of the shots absorbed. And, too, Bilal's occasional participation in the Internet-based chatroom and his maintenance of a video blog served to humanize him, allowing him a specific voice that might have been missing or effaced in a video game or a military video released to the public.[34] In a number of ways, then, the online participants in *Domestic Tension* were faced with an irreducibly human subject – and faced, by extension, with the fact that even remote violence can bear individual consequences. By foregrounding the assaulted body, Bilal's piece became a vivid metaphorical illustration of Jean Baudrillard's claim that "war is no less atrocious for being only a simulacrum – the flesh suffers just the same."[35]

In the process, Bilal's piece arguably assigned certain uncomfortable responsibilities. Most obviously, those who viewed it online were responsible for determining the direction of the piece and for the bruises that

accumulated on the artist's body. Viewers, again, were made into complicit participants. But Bilal's project also suggested, in its use of a specifically Iraqi target, that members of the American public who viewed images of Iraq from a safe distance were not uninvolved in the violence there. Rather, the structure of his work implied that there is a direct, causal relationship between violent activity carried out abroad and the domestic, civilian world on whose behalf that violence is enacted. So, too, did the color of the paintballs, whose bright yellow recalled the ribbons widely used to proclaim support for the American troops in both gulf wars. Smeared across the walls of Bilal's cell, the yellow suggested that support for the military is messy and even potentially injurious, rather than philosophically tidy and costless. Elsewhere, Bilal has argued that the American citizenry is allowed, largely through the use of remote technology, "to disengage from the consequences of war."[36] In turn, his project challenged such an attitude and dissolved any idea that a reliance upon a distant, proxy military can absolve a public of responsibility. Instead, like the paintball gun in Bilal's cell, that military is an agent, or extension, of the public's wishes, and the thousands of spent shots traces of those wishes.

Simultaneously, Bilal's piece also complicated the notion of a single, unified public. Think, again, of those yellow ribbons and their exhortation to "support our troops." Like Jacir's title, such a slogan proposes a unified, coherent public: a *we*. But just as Jacir's various respondents issued a slew of diverse requests, the online participants in *Domestic Tension* often butted heads, or acted with contrary ends in mind. Individual users consistently competed for control of the paintball gun, and several hackers attempted to force it to fire repeatedly, without pause. On the other hand, a further group of users rewrote the website's code in an effort to cause the gun to fire to the left of the cell, and thus away from Bilal.[37] At the same time, local gallery-goers brought pizza and water to his cell, in a concrete gesture of support for Bilal. The various responses to Bilal's project thus eroded any notion of a unified online community, but they also pointed to the complexity of the artistic public – made, inevitably, of individuals with distinct motivations and responses. In turn, his project also implied, by analogy, that the American public may not be as unified in its support for warfare as yellow ribbons and concise slogans imply.

But *Domestic Tension* also evoked another community: that is, Iraqis affected by the U.S. invasions. The title of Bilal's project can clearly be read in relation to his cell, where he lived in a relatively constant state of tension. It also called to mind, though, the experience of the many Iraqis who were unable to leave their

homes due to the threat of violence. For Bilal, such an association was ultimately familial: he claimed that he wanted "to be physically and emotionally closer to my family at home [in Iraq] so I could see what they are going through."[38] Given that his brother was apparently killed by shrapnel during U.S. military operations in Najaf, in 2005, and that his father died shortly after that, such a claim was a dramatic one: Bilal, in essence, was suggesting that his piece allowed him to participate vicariously in his family's difficulties and deaths. But one could also read his piece as wider in scope, for he seems too to have thought of himself as a stand-in for all Iraqis (his interest in the title *Shoot an Iraqi* supports such a view). In either case, Bilal seems to have thought of his work as allowing him to transcend distance, and to experience, in some degree, the suffering of others. And, worded thus, his experiences in the cell recall the intermediary functions of a martyr – of an individual who suffers on behalf of a larger community. As Gannit Ankori has observed, the identification of artists with martyrs, and with Christ, is a common one in the history of art and in Middle Eastern poetry.[39] Bilal's willingness to bear pain evoked the passive, volitional suffering of earlier saints, and suggested in turn a redemptive aspect: his pain was presumably borne on behalf of his family, or his people. The artist, then, became a proxy for a beleaguered community even as his artwork laid bare the logic of violence by remote control.

Martyr, surrogate pilgrim: the two projects by Bilal and Jacir ultimately evoked very different models. Admittedly, both models revolve around the idea of distance, and propose specific means of collapsing distance. So, too, did both projects. But they did so, in the end, in nearly inverse manners. Consider, for instance, the divergent ways in which the projects drew attention to connections between particular communities and distant territories. While Jacir presented the connection between exiled Palestinians and their native land as essential and emotional, Bilal implied that the relationship between American public and remote, war-torn Iraq is violent and destructive. In the process, too, the two works employed the idea of remote control very differently. In *Where We Come From*, remote control offered a temporary sense of grace or partial relief from exile, while in *Domestic Tension* it facilitated a comforting or convenient sense of detachment. One project, in other words, seems to imagine remote control as personal and (at least partly) socially recuperative, while the other positions it as impersonal and insidious. But if the two works are thus very different, they are not irreconcilable, for both problematize the notion of remote control

even as they rely centrally upon it. That is, Jacir's work nominally aims at overcoming exile but admits the irreducible facts of physical distance and political dislocation, while Bilal's enables remote violence but also critiques it. In both projects, then, actions that are carried out remotely are neither as redemptive nor as innocent as they might seem. They are, instead, the fruit of conditions – exile, warfare – that, by the logic of these works, need to be altered. And so, instead of celebrating remote control, Bilal and Jacir call attention to the plight of two victimized communities, and to the importance of self-determination and responsibility, in place of vicariousness or remote control.

Endnotes

1. T.J. Demos, "Desire in Diaspora: Emily Jacir," *Art Journal* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2003), 68-78. On the work's display at SFMOMA, see Tyler Green, "SFMOMA installed unusual wall text in Emily Jacir Gallery," *Modern Art Notes* online, January 22, 2009, at http://blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes/2009/01/sfmoma-installs-unusual-wall-t/, accessed May 20, 2011. This article benefitted from the attentive editorial work of Peter Scott Brown, and I thank him for his perceptive comments.
2. Brian Braiker, "Shoot the Iraqi!" *Newsweek* online, May 25, 2007, at http://www.newsweek.com/2007/05/24/shoot-the-iraqi.html, accessed May 20, 2011; Sam Hudzik, "Iraqi Artist Makes a Point with Virtual Paintballs," *All Things Considered*, June 1, 2007, archived at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10634342 and accessed May 20, 2011; Hossein Amirsadeghi, Salwa Mikdadi, and Nada Shabout, eds., *Newvision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 108-9.
3. See Demos, "Desire in Diaspora," 70-2, where he argues that the project seeks to "provide connections through an artistic mediation that would draw together a diasporic community, that would shed light on the absurdity of displacement, that would show the privations exiles suffer" – but ultimately also acknowledges that it cannot offer genuine relief.
4. See, for instance, Braiker, "Shoot the Iraqi!": "Those who stick around longer may even begin to think about the consequences of starting a seemingly painless, videogame-style war with overwhelming force in a faraway country."
5. On the evolution of attitudes towards vicarious pilgrimage, see Jonathan Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* (Mahwah, N.J.: Hiddenspring, 2003), 432.
6. Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendor: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2001), 128.
7. I am fully aware of Nada Shabout's reasonable claim, in her *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 35, that "modern and contemporary Arab plastic arts are not an extension, continuation, or revival of the old Islamic forms of art." And, certainly, reading Jacir's project as a variant on established practices threatens to efface the specific historical conditions that inspired her work. Nonetheless, as I will argue below, an attention to partial parallels in the history of Islam can reward, largely because of the ways in which Jacir's work ultimately differs from those parallels.
8. The hadith is summarized in both Michael Wolfe, *The Hadj: An American's Pilgrimage to Mecca* (New York: Grove Press, 1993), 214,

and Muhammad Ashiq Ilahi, *A Gift for Muslim Women* (New Delhi: Idara Isha'at-e-Diniyat, 2006), 287. See too Charles Francis Potter, *The Faiths Men Live By* (New York: Ace, 1954), 84.

9. Wolfe, *The Hadj*, 212-5.

10. See Liz Herbert McAvoy, ed., *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 36: "The friars lifted up a cross and led the pilgrims about from one place to another where our Lord had suffered his pains and his Passion, every man and woman bearing a wax candle in one hand…"

11. Michael Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience, 1500-1800* (Markus Wiener, 1996) 184, notes that the shrouds are primarily purchased "on commission for those who themselves could not make the hajj"; F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 182, points out that copper flasks filled with water are also often used to similar ends.

12. Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 209.

13. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 14.

14. Abdelwahab Elmessiri, *A Lover From Palestine, and Other Poems: An Anthology of Palestinian Poetry* (Washington, D.C.: Free Palestine Press, 1970), 77.

15. Demos makes a comparable point; see "Desire in Diaspora," 70.

16. Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 64-5.

17. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in Russell Ferguson, et al., eds., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (MIT Press, 1990), 357-366: 360-1.

18. For a more sustained consideration of this tension, see Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2 and 212.

19. Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, "Thousands of Palestinians in Israel March to Return," *The Electronic Intifada* online, May 13, 2011, at http://electronicintifada.net/content/thousands-palestinians-israel-march-return/9947, accessed May 20, 2011.

20. On the importance of choice in relation to the idea of return to Palestine, see Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 209-10.

21. Thanks to Peter Scott Brown for helping to develop this point.

22. For more on first-person shooter, or FPS, games, see Bob Rehak, "Genre Profile: First-Person Shooting Games," in Mark J.P. Wolf, *The Video Game Explosion: A History from PONG to Playstation and Beyond* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 187-195.

23. Mark Wolf, *The Medium of the Video Game* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 91.

24. Florian Rötzer, "'Shoot an Iraqi': Wafaa Bilal's Project *Domestic Tension*," *Nafas* online, May 2007: http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2007/wafaa_bilal, accessed May 20, 2011.

25. Braiker, "Shoot the Iraqi!"

26. Peter Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2009), 23 and *passim*.

27. Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009) 53. Benedict also notes that the military commonly employs video games in training, to simulate combat.

28. Andreas Gregersen and Torben Grodal, "Embodiment and Interface," in *Video Game Theory Reader Two*, eds. Bernard Perron and Mark Wolf (New York: Routledge, 2009), 65-83: 80.

29. Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 48-9.

30. Relevant here is George Orwell's well-known observation that "people sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." But recent military theory has also focused repeatedly on the relationship between civilians and military: Peter Feaver, in particular, has argued that "the essence of civil-military relations is a strategic interaction between civilian principals and military agents." Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 2-3.

31. Victor Caldarola, "Time and the Television War," Susan Jeffords and Lauren Rabinovitz, eds., *Seeing through the Media: The Persian Gulf War* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 97-106: 101.

32. Kari Lydersen, "In the Crosshairs," *In These Times* online, June 15, 2007, at http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/3222/in_the_crosshairs/, accessed May 20, 2011.

33. Indeed, Bilal claims to have been struck by the simplicity of the world view apparently held by the U.S. soldier in Colorado: thousands of miles from the battlefield, she simply saw the enemy as targets, and as bad. See Braiker, "Shoot the Iraqi!"

34. Several users apparently contacted Bilal, in fact, after seeing his video blog, to express their regrets about having shot him. In the words of one, "it's really easy to press a button shaped like a gun… It took watching your video diaries to sink in what I was doing to you." See Caroline Ewing, "Post-Domestic Tension," *f news magazine* online, June 16, 2007, at http://fnewsmagazine.com/wp/2007/06/post-domestic-tension-2/, accessed May 30, 2011.

35. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 37.

36. Kari Lydersen, "In the Crosshairs."

37. Ewing, "Post-Domestic Tension."

38. Braiker, "Shoot the Iraqi!"

39. Ankori, *Palestinian Art*, 192.