Representing Acts of Violence in Comics

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Infrastructural Violence: Urbicide, Public Space, and Postwar Reconstruction in Recent Lebanese Graphic Memoirs

Introduction: When is City Life Grievable?

The Lebanese Civil War, which raged for fifteen years from 1975 to 1990, centred most intensively on, around and *within* the country's capital city, Beirut. The conflict transformed the beautiful Mediterranean coastal city, known for its rich cultural heritage and heterogeneous communities, into a cautiously demarcated, though also ever-shifting spatial kaleidoscope of militarised zones. In particular, the war reduced the built environment's public spaces—its piazzas and squares, its beaches and roads, even its iconic architectural landmarks and ornate façades—to infrastructural 'weapons' (see Lambert 2012). The physical architecture and material infrastructure of Beirut itself became a weapon, its fractured terrain reflecting the increasingly complex sectarian conflict that spread through the city. The erection of segregation barriers and numerous checkpoints between militarised areas became common place, as well as the reduction of swathes of the city to zones of hot conflict, eradicating from Beirut much of its widely (if sometimes nostalgically) celebrated pre-war, cosmopolitan civilian life (see Calame and Charlesworth 2009, 47-52). Most notably, the city was carved in two by the installation of a Green Line that divided East from West Beirut, a space that became 'reified as a no-man's land with a handful of militia-controlled-crossings' in between (Yassin 2012, 69-72).

The Lebanese Civil War is indicative of the global urbanisation of warfare in recent decades. As Stephen Graham documents at length, 'urban areas are now the "lightning

conductors" for the world's political violence. Warfare, like everything else, is being *urbanised*' (Graham, 2004, 3-4). Clearly, warfare produces catastrophic moments of what Slavoj Žižek would call 'visible' violence—maimed bodies, injured civilians, heavily armed militia men, and so on (2008, 1). Where such instances of corporeal violence are represented, photographically or otherwise, they can provide, as Judith Butler observes, 'the conditions for breaking out of the quotidian acceptance of war [by inducing] a more generalised horror and outrage that will support and impel calls for justice and an end to violence' (2009, 11). Such images go so far as to 'frame' the conditions of what can be 'recognised' as 'grievable life'—a weighty contention if we concur with Butler that, '[w]ithout grievability, there is no life' (15). Visualising civilian populations clearly suffering from the visible afflictions of bomb blasts and rogue gunfire can shock viewers into recognising the human loss produced by urban warfare, certainly. But for the lives of such victims to really be recognised as grievable, a range of future social and infrastructural conditions similarly need to be made visible.

While acknowledging the importance of direct, 'visible' violence in mind, I therefore want in this chapter to change tack slightly, focusing on how recent Lebanese graphic memoirs, written and drawn by comics artists who were themselves present in Beirut during the Civil War (albeit as young children), excavate and critique a different kind of violence—an embedded, city-wide, *infrastructural* violence. In particular, I will address Lamia Ziadé's *Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979* (2010) and Zeina Abirached's *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2007), both drawn and written first in French and translated into English in 2011 and 2012 respectively. These artists visually reinterpret wartime Beirut by challenging its increasingly segregated and fragmented urban infrastructure in comics form. Indeed, they foreground this infrastructural violence in particular by deploying two formal

techniques at which the comics form is particularly adept: first, a self-reflexive and subjective 'process of mapping', which as Edward Holland outlines in his discussion of Joe Sacco's work, shifts away 'from the fixed ontology of maps-as-objects towards an increased engagement with the practice of mapping' itself (2015, 86); and second, what Catherine Labio, among others, has identified as the 'structural similarities between buildings and comics' (2015, 315; see also Ahrens & Meteling eds. 2010, Dittmer 2014). Here I emphasise Labio's work on comics and urban space in particular because their structural correspondence is, for her, more than formal coincidence. Comics' 'extradiegetic mirroring of domestic architecture', she contends, 'gives the page its basic structure and accounts in significant measure for the readability, emotional power, and popularity of the genre' (2015, 317). This distinction is crucial when turning, as I will in this chapter's concluding sections, to the exploration of how these Lebanese graphic memoirs seek to reconstruct, post-war, the urban fabric of the still deeply segregated, infrastructurally violent, and traumatically violated city of Beirut.

This chapter argues that the cartographic and architectural representations of the city in Ziadé's and Abirached's graphic memoirs expose the less visible, though fundamentally embedded, infrastructural violence that both exacerbated and actively participated in the more visible instances of Lebanon's wartime violence. In so doing, these comics allows us, following Žižek, 'to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible "subjective" violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent', to instead perceive the contours of an otherwise 'invisible', structural violence (2008, 1). Published some two decades after the overt violence of the Civil War came to an unstable conclusion, these Lebanese graphic memoirs engage 'post-memorially' with the infrastructure space of Beirut's wartime urban landscape. By foregrounding the deeper spatial and structural violence of the

war, they seek first to emphasise how this violence endures in the present, and second, to offer a future-oriented vision of a more inclusive, de-segregated postwar city space.

Marianne Hirsch writes that 'postmemorial work [...] strives to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression' (2013, 210). In Ziadé's and Abirached's memoirs, the built environment of the city *itself* functions as the overarching 'memorial structure' into which they reinsert their childhood memories of familial spaces and civilian resilience. As Abirached herself recalls in a recent interview, referring to the Green Line that once divided Beirut in two:

> I realized that I had to get to know the city after the war. We used to live in a very small place that was very protected and we couldn't go to the other side. Once I was able to go to the other side I felt like I had to know everything about this other side. [...] the city is changing and a lot of the old buildings are disappearing. I feel like we are losing—it's too strong to say that—but it feels like we are losing our identity. Now the city is beautiful but I feel like it doesn't belong to the people who are from here. There is an economic gap also—like everywhere—this is not special to Beirut. (Dueben 2015).

Crucially, then, both Abirached and Ziadé undertake this postmemorial work—a process of reconstruction, or as Labio might argue, a literal *rebuilding* of the city—in order first to foreground, and then resist, the 'invisible' violence that remains embedded into Beirut's infrastructural and demographic makeup in the postwar present. In so doing, they raise questions about what kinds of life are 'grievable', as Butler would have it. For Ziadé and Abirached, Beirut's pre-war cosmopolitan urbanity (and the public spaces in which it thrived) is placed centre-stage as the Civil War's most grievable casualty.

Highlighting the 'economic gap', or socioeconomic inequality, that has further contributed to the proliferation of segregationist and securitisation infrastructures that increasingly divide Beirut (see Schmid, 2006, 368-376), Abirached suggests that it is not so

much the individual civilian life that is grievable. Rather, it is the public urban spaces that allowed for the flourishing of a certain *kind* of civilian *living* that must be grieved. Such spaces, and the ability to inhabit them safely and visibly, cultivate urban 'heterogeneity' and 'encounters with difference', as a number of urban commentators have shown (Mitchell, 2003, 18; see also Amin, 2008). Within a post-war context of lingering sectarian division, such urban spaces might foster not only tolerance, Abirached realises, but a mutual recognition of the grievability of lives between those inhabiting Beirut's still physically segregated communities. If, for Butler, '[t]here is no life without the conditions of life that variably sustain life, and those conditions are pervasively social' (2010, 18), we might then add—in addition to food, shelter, education and healthcare—the need for an *infrastructural* condition of shared public space.

Both Ziadé and Abirached reframe through their visual and narrative mappings of Beirut the private space of their childhood home as a public space that facilitates the heterogeneous co-existence of multiple ethnic and religious groups. In so doing, they mobilise their personal (post-)memories of Beirut in an effort to facilitate the mutual construction and recognition of grievable life between communities still segregated from one another in the post-war present. Thinking about these comics with Butler thus allows us to emphasise the temporal futurity of what are otherwise ostensibly backward-looking memoirs: 'life is grievable, [and] it would be grieved if it were lost, [*only* when the] future anterior is installed as the condition of its life' (15). The emphasis on the 'future anterior' here helps us to understand that Ziadé's and Abirached's post-memorial (and sometimes strategically selective) engagement with Beirut, the city, grieves for the loss of its public spaces in the twentieth century so as to reconstruct them as necessary infrastructural conditions for civilian urban life in the twenty-first.

Infrastructural Violence: Urbicide and Public Space in Beirut

In their coinage of the term 'infrastructural violence', ethnographers Dennis Rodgers and Bruce O'Neill contend that 'broad and abstract social orderings such as the state, citizenship, criminality, ethnicity and class' are engrained into the physical shapes of infrastructure space with often violent ramifications (2012, 402). Their emphasis on the 'everyday' effects of infrastructural violence, when situated within the context of the everyday violence of the Lebanese Civil War—which after all, continued for well over a decade, becoming a way of life for many Beirutis—takes on a particularly pernicious aspect, a condition that has been described as 'urbicide'. Martin Coward defines this phenomenon in opposition to urbanity, which is constituted through 'an existential condition of plurality or heterogeneity' (Coward 2009, 13-15). If the 'urban' designates a condition of co-existing difference that cities and their public spaces, which as noted above pack diverse populations and different networks of cultural and social exchange into proximal spaces, tend to facilitate, then urbicide is the violent destruction of these public spaces. For Martin Shaw, 'urbicide is a form of genocide'—hence their shared root—and constitutes 'the fundamentally illegitimate form of modern war in which a civilian population as such is targeted for destruction by armed force' (2004, 153).

As I have already started to suggest, both Ziadé and Abirached recognise in their comics that this concept is a particularly pertinent lens through which to view the historical trajectory of Beirut as both a city and an urban society. Once a cosmopolitan site of cultural interaction, indicatively known in the West as 'the Paris of the Middle East', during the Civil War different factions strategically recalibrated, if not purposefully destroyed, the city's physical

fabric, fragmenting it along ethnic and religious lines to further their political agendas. The city's urban infrastructure—its multiple grids of gas and water pipes, electricity and phone lines, bridges, overpasses and roads—was fundamentally reshaped by the sectarian tensions that fuelled the war. As Sara Fregonese observes: 'Practices such as blocking streets, piercing buildings to create passages, partitioning neighbourhoods, climbing towers or even commemorating urban warfare martyrs, all played a part in the tactics and strategies used to bifurcate—physically and ideologically—this urban environment' (2009, 310).

Fifteen years of urban violence therefore drastically altered the socio-ethnic geography, physical topography and concrete layout of Beirut, and these violent spatial reconfigurations of the city's infrastructure linger on, reproducing in the present some of the war's most divisive aspects. After the war amnesty of 1991, which included peace talks and the installation of a precarious post-war government, a concerted attempt to resolve and work through the various tensions that had both led to, and been exacerbated by, the conflict, might have seemed a fundamental project. However, with sectarian enclaves still existing side-by-side in close spatial proximity, though no longer separated by dividing walls or roving militias, to move forward peacefully the Lebanese government encouraged a '[s]tructural forgetting', leading to 'media-censorship laws (the 1994 broadcasting law), and the complete absence of criminal tribunals, compensation schemes, or truth and reconciliation committees' (Larkin 2010, 617-618). As Robert Bevan has argued, this forgetting takes place as much through the built environment as it does in the realm of politics or social relations: 'To lose all that is familiar—the destruction of one's environment—can mean a disorientating exile from the memories they have invoked'; correspondingly, for Bevan the postwar reconstruction process requires the literal rebuilding of the urban public spaces that have been eradicated by war, and both Ziadé and Abirached engage in such a project. Recovering

urbanity in this infrastructural way functions to tie both individuals and segregated ethnic enclaves 'back into a wider community' (2016, 24).

War memories have of course, despite Lebanon's institutional amnesia, remained in Beirut's public consciousness and have marked its postwar cultural production, and the graphic memoirs discussed in this chapter are no exception. Such memories tend to crystallise 'around lessons learned, injustices still to be resolved, and the recurring threat of political violence' (Larkin 2010, 617). Crucially, as Craig Larkin concludes from extensive interviews with the city's inhabitants, 'it is in the scarred urban landscape that [many] situate and explain their nation's violent past', pointing to 'derelict houses, bullet-pocked walls, and posters and memorials to fallen fighters as the most enduring reminders of war' (621). For esteemed Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury, Beirut is 'a broken mirror' (De Cauter 2011, 427); 'in piecing together the present', he has observed, 'we rethink our memories. [...] We make a choice what to remember and what to forget' (Rahim 2015). In 'second-generation civil war literature', Lebanese novelists and artists have sought to reconstruct the urbanity of prewar Beirut 'in writing and drawing [...] and thereby preserve it for the future' (Lang, 2014: 488-489).

Images are crucial in this reconstruction process. 'Beirut is photogenic', writes Miriam Cooke: 'Ironically, the Lebanese civil war made it even more so. During the war [...] and afterwards the urban violence was obsessively photographed' (2002, 393, 397). This emphasis on the photographic image resonates with Hirsch's commentary on postmemorialisation: photographs outlive 'oral or written narrative', she writes, functioning 'as ghostly revenants from an irretrievably lost past world' (2013, 215-216). But Hirsch's commitment to the photograph is, in the case of Beirut, a troubling one. As Butler points out in her discussion of war photography, 'the photograph, in framing reality, is already

interpreting what will count within the frame' (2005, 823). She continues: 'the frame takes part in the interpretation of the war compelled by the state; it is not just a visual image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively, even forcibly' (2005, 823); the result, as I have already indicated, is the state-sanctioning of what lives, and indeed, what landscapes, are deemed grievable (Butler 2009, 15).

Memorialised in singular photographs of a violated urban landscape, wartime Beirut circulates visually in the twenty-first century as an unpeopled geography of physical destruction. The violence of the Civil War, its civilian casualties and complex kaleidoscope of sectarian militias, is neatly and retrospectively consolidated into photographic representations of bullet-ridden buildings and other dilapidated infrastructures. All that then remains is for the buildings to be torn down and new ones to be built, a reductively smooth and amnesic process of postwar reconstruction that fails to account for the violence inflicted on ordinary civilian lives, as well as modes of civilian living. Within this visual culture, the urban infrastructure that bears the scars of Lebanon's wartime violence simultaneously—and somewhat paradoxically—overshadows the direct, 'visible' violence of civilian casualties, while also becoming the site around which effective efforts to reconstruct Beirut's pre-war urbanity, such as those undertaken by Ziadé and Abirached, must necessarily mobilize, as we shall now see.

Lamia Ziadé's *Bye Bye Babylon*: The City as Witness

With these infrastructural and cultural coordinates in mind, then, the publication of a number of comics about the Lebanese Civil War in recent years is perhaps unsurprising (see di Ricco 2015, Merhej 2015). As I have already suggested, comics intervene particularly effectively

into the infrastructurally violent conditions of both wartime and postwar Beirut. They triangulate the relationship between, on the one hand, a city still bearing the scars of urban conflict and on the other, an archive of singular images devoid of cohesive and conciliatory narratives, with and through a counter-cultural (or subcultural) form that has a long historical tradition of resistance to censorship laws—particularly in the US, but also more recently in Lebanon itself (Hatfield, 2005, 21-22).[i] This anti-institutional counter-culture thus functions to complicate Lebanon's official 'War Story'. As Cooke points out, this 'War Story', with the 'W' and 'S' capitalised to indicate its hegemony, is 'allowed', whilst 'others' are 'proscribed', leading her to ask: 'How could the Lebanese war be told within the frame of the War Story when its experiences exploded outside available frames' (2002: 398-399)?

With their architecture of multiple frames, as well as the self-referentiality of this framing that is also central to their formal mechanism, comics are able to expose the 'frame' of this 'War Story', which 'seeks to contain, convey, and determine what is seen' (Butler 2009, 10); and, we might add, what is remembered. They foreground the violence of the war's censored memorialisation through a simultaneously literal and metaphorical account of the infrastructural violence of the urban conflict. As Hillary Chute argues, '[i]n its succession of replete frames, comics calls attention to itself, specifically, as evidence', as a form of witness (2016, 2). Crucially, as Chute observes elsewhere, this retelling, or witnessing, in comics form is 'not necessarily an emotional recuperation', somehow '"cathartic" or didactic'—more importantly, the relationship is 'a textual, material one', allowing comics to make an explicitly 'political intervention into mainstream representation through their form' (2010, 2-4).

Ziadé's *Bye Bye Babylon* and Abirached's *A Game for Swallows* are comparable in their paradoxically double-facing yet strategic project of memorialisation and amnesia, one that they both route through the infrastructural coordinates of the city. The authors mobilize their

post-memorial drawings of private and familial spaces as public moments of civilian living, thereby countering the violence of urbicide that endures in the present. In this sense, they follow well-known Lebanese 'war memoirs' such as Jean Said Makdisi's indicatively titled *Beirut Fragments*, published at the end of the war in 1990. There, Makdisi's fragmented diary entries and vignettes document Beirut's 'new topography', as the city's prewar 'cosmopolitanism'—'the rollicking pluralism of its society'—is spliced into segregated enclaves through proliferating urban violence (1999, 68-70). Her mapping of a fragmented form onto Beirut's splintering urbanism resonates with Khoury's metaphor of the 'broken mirror' (Khoury 2015), and underpins also both Ziadé's and Abirached's comics. These artists recount their childhood experience of the war, reconstructing it through a montage of firsthand—though because of their youth intermittent—memories, secondhand stories from their parents, and most importantly, the violent traces that remain indexed by the city's physical infrastructure. Crucially then, for both Ziadé and Abirached these (post-)memories are not only excavated out of, but also rebuilt back into the city they depict.

Jörn Ahrens, Arno Meteling and others have demonstrated at length the long historical connections between urban spaces and comics (2010). Cities, with their 'combinations of words and images in the form of signage and graffiti' (6), read as comics and vice versa, and Ziadé and Abirached exploit this formal and material correlation, rebuilding the grid of the city through the grid of their comics sequences. Both Ziadé and Abirached carefully map the layout of the city in opening splash pages, frontispieces and appendices. As Labio observes in her qualificatory discussion not of 'architecture in comics', but 'the architecture *of* comics', we find in these Lebanese graphic memoirs that 'the architectural disposition of the page intensifies the emotive charge of comics by triggering individual and collective memories—of home, childhood, and earlier examples of narrative art' (2015, 317). Though drawn in

starkly different styles, for both Ziadé and Abirached the city contains memories that, once recovered, might replace the postwar infrastructural violence of ongoing sectarian division with Beirut's prewar public urban spaces, thereby fostering a future of cosmopolitan plurality. In so doing, both comics counter Lebanon's mainstream 'War Story' that sustains and reproduces lingering sectarian division through their efforts to rebuild a socially inclusive and spatially fluid—that is to say, public—urban space.

A crucial component of this rebuilding process is the threading of personal memories (and postmemories) into their depictions of the city, lacing them through and around street corners, architectural landmarks and Beirut's distinctive coastal topography. An early map in Ziadé's *Bye Bye Babylon* is inflected with a subjective psychogeography, as she maps locations remembered from her childhood and moments of violence that impinged upon her family and their friends not temporally but spatially—the multiple sites of violence thus occur and exist not through time, but with claustrophobic simultaneity.[ii] Its hand drawn quality emphasises her subjective response to the city, whilst the future tense of the accompanying textual commentary—'he'll continue', 'they'll endure', 'they decide'—strains against the spatially static map, drawing it into the present. The subjective quality of this map is then foregrounded by a contrasting to-scale map which is included as an appendix to the comic. Here a grid overlays the map of Beirut to indicate its cartographic accuracy, whilst the accompanying key registers locations from the narrative—Ziadé's 'parent's apartment', her 'father's office'—alongside significant historical sites, such as the Holiday Inn and the British Bank of the Middle East.

Insert Fig.1: Ziadé's hand drawn map of downtown Beirut is layered, palimpsest-like, with now iconic locations in the postmemorial visual culture of the Lebanese Civil War (the

Holiday Inn, Place des Martyrs), but these are nevertheless interspersed with locations she recalls from her childhood (the Empire Theatre, Place Riad al-Solh).

This interlacing of Ziadé's personal memory and city space challenges a 'War Story' that blames Beirut's prewar plurality for its subsequent violence, a line of argument that continues to justify ethnic segregation in the present. Ziadé meshes her own childhood memories with the postmemories received from her parents—not to mention the infrastructure of the city itself—to make a blanket condemnation of the war's urban violence, regardless of sectarian affiliation. Through this refusal to affiliate herself with a sectarian faction, she moves beyond the 'visible' violence of the Civil War's local infighting to target her critique instead at the larger, more abstract geopolitical, neocolonial and economic forces that fuelled the Civil War.

Her depiction of Beirut's physical urban infrastructure is again crucial here. Reflecting its built infrastructural environment in comics form allows Ziadé to explore, to return to Rodgers and O'Neill, first, how these abstract 'relationships of power and hierarchy translate into palpable forms of physical and emotional harm'; and second, and perhaps more importantly, how this focus on the violence embedded in the city's infrastructure offers 'a potential place for imagining more positive politics' (2012, 402). Ziadé uses comics' cartographic capabilities to identify the violent, urbicidal eradication of the spatial conditions needed for heterogeneous civilian living that took place during the Civil War. But she also recovers instances of her and her family and friends' resilient wartime civilian living, re-construing her remembered engagement with these prewar public spaces—or 'little paradises', as she calls them—as a social blueprint from which future, de-segregated public spaces in Beirut might be constructed. It is in this sense that she deploys what Carolene Ayaka

and Ian Hague describe as comics' 'inherently multicultural form', which draws on 'both cultures of images and cultures of words' (2015, 3), to rebuild back into the city multicultural spaces in which the grievability of lives are mutually recognised.

If at first glance *Bye Bye Babylon* resembles a children's colouring book, this is soon disrupted by descriptions of massacres reprinted as awkwardly positioned chunks of Times New Roman typescript. Meanwhile, though the comic opens with bright imagistic reproductions of imported Western commodities drawn in a child's scrawling crayon, images of militia men armed with kalashnikovs, destroyed buildings and segregated streets slowly seep into the comic's frames, jarring against this childlike aesthetic. The comic gradually blends its depictions of commodities such as ketchup, Kellogg's cereal and cocktail peanuts with aesthetically similar representations of weapons, from AK-47s to RPGs, all the while returning to page-length spreads of public buildings and squares that become increasingly damaged by wartime violence as the comic progresses.

In one double-page spread, the text visually conflates the 'wondrous items' finding their way from New York and London onto Beirut's 'supermarket shelves' with the 'stockpiling' of 'arsenals with weapons and munitions'—meanwhile, a ketchup bottle leaking a bright red ooze visually links these circulating commodities with the imminent bloody violence of the war. Through these visual cues Ziadé levels her critique at a set of geopolitical forces—as well as corrupt Lebanese politicians and self-interested militia leaders—that exploited local ethnic-religious tensions for their own gain: commodities such as ketchup, which have flowed from the Cold War's hegemonic players through Beirut and into the Middle East, are easily replaced with arms, she implies. For international parties and a profit-oriented global economy more generally, it matters not whether these profitable trade routes funnel consumer goods or deadly weaponry into the city. As M. Lynx Qualey argues, Ziadé reveals how 'war

is ritualised, commercialised, capitalised on, and profited from'—indeed, how it 'is just another product' (2011).

Crucial here is the extent to which the city emerges as itself a protagonist, functioning as a kind of physical witness that testifies against the urbicidal violence perpetrated against it. The colourful products of the comic's opening pages jar with the browns and greys of the scenes of urban warfare, images that in turn recollect and reframe the photographic documentation of wartime Beirut as it circulates in the mainstream postmemorial visual culture. On the one hand, Ziadé contextualises these singular images with in-depth accounts of the war's multiple participants, including a comprehensive timeline alongside the comic's concluding map in its final pages. On the other, Ziadé's personal memories of prewar Beirut's celebrated cosmopolitanism are infused back into the city's private spaces—her family's apartment, the backseat of her father's car—as an expression of civilian resilience against the urban destruction that rages outside. For Ziadé, the urbicide resulting from the civil war has broken up a cosmopolitan condition of urbanity, one that is occluded from the singularly framed photographs of Beirut's violated urban landscape, but that she here seeks to recover through her comic's multicultural form, mobilising it toward a future-oriented postwar reconstruction project.

Zeina Abirached's *A Game for Swallows*: Drawing Urban Division

In *A Game for Swallows*, Abirached embarks upon a similar project, visualising the eradication of Beirut's prewar urbanity through a cartographic, semi-abstract mapping of its violated physical infrastructure. This is most obviously undertaken in an early sequence of double-page spreads, which begins with a thickly textured, black and white map of city

streets. Turning the page, the reader finds these black and white streets restricted to the margins of the pages, the centre transformed into a void of white nothingness. Then, in the final splash page of the sequence, the marginalised streets are fragmented once more, reduced to segregated blips on the urban landscape that are denoted by violent infrastructures such as 'oil drums', 'containers', 'barbed wire' and 'sandbags', all of which, the narrator informs us, 'carve out a new geography' (Abirached 2012, 24-29).

Insert Fig.2: The first double-page spread in *Game for Swallows*' opening mapping sequence.

As Eszter Szép writes of this sequence, here 'Beirut is cut in two', the 'whiteness' indicating 'inaccessible space' (2014, 31); which is to say, space that is no longer public. The comic asks readers to witness the process of urbicide suffered by Beirut through the gradual eradication of the city's social and spatial connective tissue. However, there remains also in these pages a small, encircled location within the fabric of the city, labelled 'here', denoting the resilient space of Abirached's family apartment where, as the comic goes on to document, civilian living continues in defiance of the urbicide that is otherwise violently eradicating Beirut's public spaces. In response, and as for Ziadé, Abirached here laces her personal memories and postmemories of her familial private life into the city, reconfiguring them as alternative public spaces.

Furthermore, though the comic documents the fragmentation of these spaces, jamming the pages with blockades of debris that dis-incentivise movement through the city, the climactic moment to which the whole plot leans—the safe arrival of her parents who, intermittently throughout the narrative, are seen making their way across the physical barrier of the Green Line that separates West from East Beirut—is premised on the ability to bypass

these physical barriers and the sectarian divisions that they symbolise. Indeed, the eventual arrival of Abirached's parents defies urbicidal efforts (and, it should be stated, postwar governmental policies) to segregate different ethnic and religious communities from one another, documenting the lengths to which civilians will go to retain and reproduce the city's prewar public spaces.

Insert Fig.3: The final double-page spread of Abirached's opening sequence, in which Beirut's urban geography is carved up by various violent infrastructures.

As I have suggested, then, the private space of Abirached's childhood apartment is reconfigured throughout the narrative as a space of public conviviality, as different members of the civilian community come and go, interacting peacefully, sharing food and stories, as well as collaborating collectively toward the provision of infrastructural services such as access to gas and electricity (see, for example, Abirached 2012, 115-119). As Hirsch writes of postmemorial cultures more broadly, 'the screens of gender and familiality, and the images that mediate them [...] function as screens that absorbs the shock, filter and diffuse the impact of trauma, diminish harm' (2013: 226). However, Abirached gives these 'screens' literal shape through the physical walls of her family apartment, reinserting the public space they contain imaginatively back into Beirut's city space. The comic deconstructs the singularly framed visual memorialisation of the Civil War as it circulates in photographs of bullet-riddled urban buildings and dilapidated infrastructure, revealing instead their physical interiors to emphasise the continued existence of civilian resilience and public community in spite of the urbicidal and infrastructural violence that sought to segregate Beirut's urban environment.

As for war memoirs such as Makdisi's, then, both Ziadé and Abirached foreground the infrastructural violence of the war, as it is engrained into—and then memorialised visually through photographs of—Beirut's physical urban architecture. In so doing, they both also challenge an official 'War Story' that continues to justify the division of contemporary Beirut along sectarian lines, an infrastructure of segregation that in turn allows different religious communities to deem some lives grievable and others less so. If Ziadé and Abirached's commitment to the urbanity of prewar Beirut—configured here as a society of tolerance, intercultural exchange and religious plurality—is refracted through an undeniably nostalgic lens, they nevertheless emphasise the political urgency of this recovery project by asserting public space as a necessary condition for recognising the grievability of all kinds of multicultural civilian lives. In so doing, they map out the spatial and social coordinates for a postwar society no longer shaped by segregationist infrastructures and factional enclaves, promoting instead a vision of urban space that can be mobilised effectively towards conflict resolution.

Perhaps most valuably, however, is the extent to which these comics self-reflexively foreground the fundamental role that the physical space of the city has to play in such resolution; they use the multi-dimensional architecture *of* the comics form to rebuild a publicly hospitable city, broadening the private space of the childhood home to accommodate this function. Whereas in Lebanese society more widely the effort 'to remember and to forget' has been informed, as Samir Khalaf has documented, by an 'impulse to seek refuge in cloistered spatial communities' (2002: 307), these comics invert this process. They reclaim a personal archive of Beirut's private spaces in order to build a new postmemorial urban geography, one that transcends infrastructural violence and sectarian division through an

emphasis on postwar public collaboration, a mutual recognition of grievable lives, and the possibility of future peaceful co-existence.

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[i] Most notably, the comics collective *Samandal* were prosecuted by the Lebanese government under these postwar censorship laws for 'a) inciting sectarian strife b) denigrating religion c) publishing false news and d) defamation and slander' in 2009. After protracted legal proceedings, they were found guilty of these charges and the resulting fines have financially crippled the collective, which nevertheless sporadically produces new comics anthologies that remain contingent on crowd-funding campaigns (see Samandal 2015).

[ii] Ziadé does not paginate her memoir, and so I am unable to point to the specific point at which this occurs in the book. However, this lack of pagination might itself contributes to the reader's multi-directional encounter with the comic. Bereft of chronological coordinates, readers instead encounter the text spatially, more like a map, as Ziadé works to secrete prewar cosmopolitan spaces back into Beirut's urban present.