

The fabrication of the male hero martyr can be linked to the discussion about the Martyrs Statue in the 1950s, when Hoayek's monument was not considered heroic enough and was replaced by Mazzacurati's statue that shows the martyrs, who are represented, as in *Nancy*, in the form of three men and only one woman. The three male and one female protagonist in the play reflect the reality of the *Wars*, in which significantly more men than women were venerated as martyrs. By cross-dressing Lina, who is shown with attributes usually restricted to male martyrs, *Nancy* reveals that gender is performed in martyr posters.

Likewise, truth is constructed in images of shuhada. By announcing living actors as martyrs and by re-using the same photograph for different deaths, *Nancy* reminds us that truth claims in martyr posters should always be questioned. They could be, like the shahid's story, fragments of a whole or simply wrong, even if anecdotes and images of martyrs travel through decades.

Time is inherently inscribed in the image of the martyr. Shuhada died in the past but are still on the walls of the present. Yet, unlike Murr Tower and Holiday Inn, which in *Nancy* point to the non-linearity of past and present, martyrs are not only revenants but also arrivants who carry an unfulfilled dream for the future, which is the domination over Lebanon by the group for which they died.

Although *Nancy* does not fully explore the notion of the Derridean spectral ghost—and I have argued that the sectarian martyr can be understood as such—the play nevertheless exemplifies that the martyr is on the threshold between life and death because when the protagonists die they quickly return to life. Therefore, there is no set boundary between being dead and being alive in the play. Today, as *Faces* by Hadjithomas/Joreige illustrates by re-tracing the fading image of the martyr, the shuhada appear in a different form, not as flesh-and-blood beings but as images. As long as their pictures are on the walls, the martyrs, via their spectral presence, are both dead and alive. As *Faces* shows us, it seems that the martyrs can only be laid to rest when they are not glorified or demonised and are instead accepted for what they are: hauntings of the past and the future that disturb the present.

## 6.2 Old and New Pictures of the (Un)Dead: Beirut 2020–23

During the time of writing there were mainly three types of dead on the walls: sectarian martyrs, martyrs of the thawra, and those who died in the explosion. Aside from new technical developments and minor changes in colours and symbolism, the anatomy of the sectarian martyr poster has remained the same as it was in the posters that were made during the *Wars* and then reflected in *Nancy*. However, the thawra has brought a new mode of iconicity to the martyr—namely, that of an everyday citizen. Images of the dead of the blast, in contrast, follow the anatomy

of the sectarian martyr image but also adapt the leisurely depiction of the martyrs of the thawra, and the images of those who died in the explosion are like the photographs of the missing often held by their relatives during protests. No new elements were introduced in their pictures, which is why I view their posters as formal nostalgia that consists of pastiches and repetitions.

Photographs that changed their function, symbols, and slogans were still to be found in all these images. Also, hierarchies of death can still be identified, since images of certain people are distributed in quantitatively higher numbers than those of others, as I have shown with the example of Sahar Fares. As was the case during the Wars with young female martyrs, Fares's attractiveness is often mentioned, which is not the case regarding young men killed by the blast. This demonstrates that gender roles are still performed. For the thawra, however, this cannot be observed, as there were no female casualties.

While some posters of the thawra continue the sectarian habit of including Mazzacurrati's Martyrs Statue, the images of those who died in the blast are sometimes juxtaposed with the celebrity ruin of the silos, which I understand as a continuation of the meaning of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower, in the sense that strong emotions are attached to all these structures.

What distinguishes the dead from the blast from the sectarian and thawra martyrs is the type of ghost each becomes. The dead of 4 August are not spectral ghosts, and they are also not latent ghosts, like the missing are. Rather, they are revenants, pointing to the past but, unlike the thawra and sectarian martyrs, not to the future. Instead, they announce that the future is cancelled, a feeling that was also tangible in Beirut in the years after the explosion.

While the cancellation of the future was ignored by some image-makers, there are also artists who did not participate in a discourse of a better future to come but deal with the unfinished business of the blast. I suggested that there are two visual approaches by which image-makers reflect on images regarding 4 August: a documentary strategy and an appropriation strategy. While Hadjithomas/Joreige, in *As Night Comes When Day Is Gone*, visualise the moment of the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster in a Toufician sense, there are also works that were produced, mostly by the artists of the generation that followed the Post-War Generation, that remind us of aspects of *Nancy*.

The blurring of times between the Wars and the explosion is revealed in the works of Saadé's *A Discreet Intruder* and in Mrad's photograph *Ghost of a City*. Both works indicate that the blast is a continuation of the Wars, and this is similar to *Nancy*, which, through the inclusion of the time after 1990 in the anecdotes, in particular the shooting at the Arab University, points to the protraction of the Wars.

Murr Tower functions to bookend *Nancy* and therefore also blurs time. As mentioned above, the silos can be seen as a continuation of Murr Tower and appear as such in a photograph by Boulos and in Mourad's 218. By incorporating the silos in their images, these two artists, like the creators of *Nancy*, reflect on how ruins can be charged with symbolic and emotional meaning.

Boulos's photograph of a woman, who is standing in front of the silos, is accompanied by an anecdote of the portrayed, and the dead in Mourad's video enter his house via an anecdote. As *Nancy* has already shown us, if there is no definite version of what has happened, events can be narrated only through personal, individual, and unofficial stories. By relying on anecdotes, Mourad and Boulos resist the state's non-narrative of why the explosion happened. The images Mourad used to embody the dead of the blast are from the AIF. They come from another time and another context and are re-staged with contemporary actors who do not resemble the dead. As we have seen in *Faces*, spectral ghosts come back in a different form, but usually one that is still recognisable and bears at least a certain resemblance to its previous form. Not so in 218. A similar non-resemblance can also be found in Boulos's image, which employs the image formula of the dead in front of the silos but shows a living person, and in Mourad's image, which does not depict the picture of the man killed in the explosion but only alludes to this very image via a banner.

While *Faces* and partly also *Nancy* reflect on the ghostly presence of the sectarian martyrs by appropriating their posters and therefore making it easy for spectators familiar with martyr posters to recognise the underlying images, the artists dealing with the ghostly presence of the dead of the blast no longer make the dead resemble themselves. This, in my reading, hints at the fact that the dead from the blast are not spectral martyrs, since the future to which they point is, like their resemblance, absent.

As we have seen, many topics of *Nancy* are still relevant today. The dying and coming back to life element of the protagonists in *Nancy* is a nod to the way that, at least since 1975, Lebanon has been caught in a never-ending cycle of violence. This situation was still visible on the walls and in the city during the time of writing. Had the play been written during the time in which I wrote this book, then Rabih might have been involved as a LF militiaman in combat in Tayyouneh, where he would have killed Ziad, who then would have been hailed as a martyr on a Hezbollah poster; Hatem might have died during a protest and been declared a martyr of the thawra; and Lina might have lived in Ashrafieh; maybe she would have died in the explosion before appearing as a drawing in the installation of Brady the Black and, finally, being washed away by water cannons. However, as I have already hinted in 2.1, the celebration and visualisation of martyrs is not peculiar to Lebanon.