My theoretical framework in this part was informed by Barthes's essay 'Rhetoric of the Image', and the focus of the discussion was on the connotative level. I have reflected on the meanings and appropriations of party logos, other symbols, and slogans in the martyr posters of *Nancy*. The play uses these elements in a more simplistic manner than was employed in the posters of the *Wars* but suggests a pattern in how the elements were and are used in sectarian visuals. For example, in *Nancy*, crosses can be encountered only in posters that accompany Christian deaths, whereas the Dome of the Rock only appears in posters that were issued for Muslim martyrdoms. In a similar vein, Christian-connoted slogans are used only in Christian images and Quranic slogans only in posters issued by Islamic parties.

In general, *Nancy* shows us that the anatomy of the posters was very similar among all parties during the *Wars*, as all consisted of the same elements, including a party logo, other symbols, and a slogan. However, a fourth component was also common in the posters, namely, that of the photographic image. This element will be the subject of the next part.

4.2 The Martyr and the Photographic Image: Indexicality, Iconicity, and Truth Claims

Nancy reflects the photographic image in the martyr poster and opens different perspectives on the relationship between the photograph and the shahid.

I will first argue that photography is the preferred medium for the depiction of martyrs due to its indexicality (the depicted has left a trace) and iconicity (the depicted resembles the thing it represents). Both, in combination, produce emotions among the spectators.

Second, aided by a close reading of *Nancy* that is linked to *Inhabitants*, *Three Posters*, and a movie that Maroun Baghdadi shot during the *Wars*, I show that these works demonstrate that indexicality and iconicity do not correspond to a truth claim (the depicted scene is put into a context of what it represents, what it refers to, and how the depicted scene should be interpreted) and that truth claims in martyr posters, which are supported by photographic evidence, should always be questioned.

Next, by relating *Nancy* to *Inhabitants*, *...A Faraway Souvenir*, an artwork by Hadjithomas/Joreige, and posters of the *Wars*, I demonstrate that contemporary artists reflect on different modes of turning the photographic image of the martyr into a currency. In such a process, each poster acts as a proof of the human price a party is willing to pay for their cause.

I then discuss how *Nancy* shows us the fact that the photograph is usually a recycled image that was not taken on the occasion of martyrdom but instead migrated from an ID photograph to a poster. In the context of this discussion, I will also

explain how the function of martyr posters from the *Wars* changed, because today, most posters no longer announce deaths but have become historical documents.

Finally, I discuss violent images and images of violence and argue that many posters of martyrs can be linked to a counter-image that shows the deceased not as a hero but as a defeated enemy. Depending on who has issued the poster, violent images can act as trophy pictures or as images of accusation.

4.2.1 The Photograph Cannot Speak for Itself: Indexicality, Iconicity, and Truth Claims in Martyr Posters

Most of the posters in *Nancy* and from the *Wars* include photographs. Alam has argued that photography's ability 'to record an individual's singularity' is the reason it is the preferred medium for showing martyrs. Further, he writes that photography has a 'humanizing effect', as the shahid is shown as close as possible to his actual appearance.[338]

In those instances where martyr posters do not include a photograph of the shahid, they usually instead show a painting or drawing made after his photograph. It is beyond the scope of this book to go into detail about why photographs of martyrs were turned into paintings, but Mohammad Moussalli, who made commissioned paintings of political leaders during the *Wars*, told Maasri that one reason for the medium's transformation was that paintings make the depicted people more charismatic and appealing than they actually were.[339] Similarly—albeit in the context of turning photographs of martyrs of the Iran-Iraq War into painted murals in Iran—Shariar Khonsari has claimed that this shift makes the martyr's appearance 'better', because possible flaws of the face and body can be beautified.[340]

Photo theory usually considers painting less capable than photography in terms of its ability to capture what the subject actually looked like. For example, André Bazin claims:

338 Johnny Alam, 'Undead Martyrs and Decay: When Photography Fails Its Promise of Eternal Memory', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 18, no. 3 (2014): 582.

339 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 48. Maasri also states that in the 1980s, Hezbollah commissioned an oil painting for each martyr, gave it to the martyr's family, and used it for his poster. It should be added that this is not the case in all posters because numerous Hezbollah martyr posters show photographs of the deceased instead of paintings.

340 Shahriar Khonsari, 'The Role of Photographs and Photography in Representation of Martyrdom Mythology in the Murals of Tehran', *MANZAR The Scientific Journal of Landscape* 36, no. 8 (2016): 12.

> Painting is after all, an inferior way of making likenesses, an ersatz of the process of reproduction. Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation.[341]

Bazin understands painting as a minor form of image-making, as photography can provide a closer resemblance to the real. This is of course also true for the martyr posters, but through the process of painting, in what Bazin would term an 'inferior way', the shahid is intended to become more handsome.

Thirteen years after Bazin, Susan Sontag stated that a photograph

> is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real; like a footprint or a death mask. While a painting, even one that meets photographic standards of resemblance is never more than the stating of an interpretation, a photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects)—a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be.[342]

Bazin and Alam focus on the iconicity of photography, which is the resemblance of the image to the thing it represents. Yet for Sontag, when defining the crucial difference between painting and photography, it is the medium's indexicality that is decisive.

Indexicality is a concept coined by the mathematician Charles Sanders Peirce in the nineteenth century. In a nutshell, the photographic index states that what had been in front of the camera has left a trace, which is perceived as evidence of the referent's existence.[343] For example, a bullet hole proves that a gun has been fired and has hit the wall, although the bullet is absent. The same is true for a photograph; light emanating from the camera has touched the referent and returned to the device, thereby imprinting itself on photographic paper and leaving a trace of the depicted. Like the bullet, the person in front of the camera is no longer present but has left proof that the situation has occurred. Therefore, the photograph testifies that the subject actually existed in front of the camera when hit by rays of light.

341 André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', *Film Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1960): 8.

342 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2005 [1973]), 120.

343 For a photo theoretical discussion of the index, see Peter Geimer, *Theorien der Fotografie: Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2009), 58–69.

But photography's iconicity also plays a role, as Tom Gunning argues:

> Our evaluation of a photograph as accurate (i.e. visually reflecting its subject) depends not simply on its indexical basis (the chemical process), but on our recognition of it as looking like its subject. A host of psychological and perceptual processes intervene here which cannot be reduced to the indexical process. The recognition of a photograph by a viewer as an image of its subject would not simply result from indexically. Indeed, one could produce an indexical image of something or someone that remained unrecognizable. The image must also be legible in order to be likened to its subject.[344]

Not only the trace is important, but also the recognition of the subject.

However, neither indexicality nor iconicity can create explanations, and therefore they should be separated from photography's truth claim, which 'is not simply a property inherent in a photograph, but a claim made for it'.[345] As Gunning explains,

> the apparatus, in itself, can neither lie, nor tell the truth. Bereft of language, a photograph relies on people to say things about it or for it. […] in order to tell the truth, the photograph must be subjected to a series of discourses, become, in effect, the supporting evidence for a statement. […] in order to speak the truth the photograph must be integrated into a statement.[346]

A photograph is like a bullet hole, which does not tell us anything about the circumstances of the bullet hitting the wall or who fired the gun. It could be used as supporting evidence, telling a story that the gun was fired by, for example, Hezbollah in June, even if it was actually fired by Amal in July. Neither indexicality nor iconicity themselves create a truth claim. A photograph is silent. It confirms that the subjects were at some point in front of the camera, but by itself it does not make any statements about the circumstances in which it has been taken.

The photographs in the martyr posters are thus indexical and iconic, as they testify that the deceased, before becoming a martyr, actually existed in front of the camera—beams of light have transferred his face, as lifelike as possible, onto photographic paper. But the photograph of the shahid, except for that of the celebrity martyr, as I will discuss in 4.3, does not make sense on its own. Like the bullet holes on the walls of Beirut, it says nothing. Similarly, if a photograph of a martyr was

344 Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index?, or Faking Photographs', *Nordicom Review* 25, nos. 1–2 (2004): 41.

345 Ibid., 42.

346 Ibid.

hung on a wall without additional information, it would not tell us when, why, or for whom he died.[347] To do so, the image needs to be embedded in a context. The photograph is therefore merely supporting evidence for the elements that create the truth claim—namely, the party logo, sectarian symbols, and slogan.

If we imagine the aforementioned posters without a photograph, in most cases, only logos, symbols, and slogans would remain. A truth claim—that is, the announcement of the martyrdom for a certain party—could still be made. For example, if we imagine the Ahrar poster (*Fig. 3.55*) that I discussed above to exist without the photograph, then, due to the party logos, it would still clearly announce a martyrdom for Ahrar. However, individual martyr posters without a photograph of the deceased would evoke an impression of incompleteness. Although the photograph acts only as supporting evidence of the truth claim, it is the element in the poster that attracts the attention of passers-by. The face of the dead is the first thing that catches the eye and creates an illusion of reality (iconicity) and proof of having been there (indexicality), which generates the medium's ability to 'conjure deep emotions'.[348] If we follow Barthes, the photograph would be the punctum of the poster, 'that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)'.[349] As a trace of the dead, it is stronger and more immediate than any symbol or writing in its power to create a sensual response among the spectators.[350]

Maasri argues in a similar vein when she writes that by evoking affection, martyr posters are intended to mobilise the living to follow the path of the shahid.[351] And I, too, was moved when looking at hundreds of martyr posters in the AUB archives. Not only the sheer mass of shuhada, one face after the other emerging from a drawer, but also the haptic object in my hands, instead of seeing it on a screen, and the intimate moment, where it was only me and the martyrs in the room, produced uncomfortable, slightly distracted emotions in me and left me with a feeling of nausea for the rest of the day.

Photographs in martyr posters are important because they have the power to attract the attention of spectators and elicit emotions. Although the photograph testifies that the subject has existed in front of the camera, it only announces him

347 Considering the custom of putting up faces of the dead in Lebanon, one could of course assume that the person depicted is dead and is potentially considered a martyr.

348 Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 50.

349 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Lang, 1981), 27. Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, 57–58 has also applied Barthes's theory of studium and punctum to images of martyrs, but her focus is on the personal relationship the living had to the dead and not to the photograph as such.

350 K.M. Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 100.

351 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 88.

as a martyr when embedded in an environment that claims truth—namely, that of the logos, symbols, and slogans. In my reading, *Nancy* reflects on indexicality, iconicity, and the truth claim of the photographic image in martyr posters, as I will discuss below.

4.2.2 Re-Using the Same Photograph for Different Deaths and Presenting Living Actors as Martyrs: Indexicality and Iconicity as Non-Truth Claims in *Nancy*

By re-using identical photographs of the actors for different deaths and by inserting faces of living actors in the posters of martyrs, *Nancy* reveals that indexicality and iconicity are not truth claims and that the use of the photographic medium as a creator of truth should be critically questioned.

I will here discuss only one example of the multiplication of the same photograph. This photograph appears in two posters (*Figs. 3.10–3.11*) that depict Rabih's face against a yellow background and looking into the camera. While each poster accompanies a different death, in both images, his left hand touches his left cheek, birds fly around him, and the Ahrar logo is visible above his head.

The first poster (*Fig. 3.10*) is accompanied by the following text, in which Rabih narrates that he was stopped by Marada militiamen at a checkpoint in the North shortly after the killing of Tony Frangieh in 1978.

> They said: 'What are you?' I said: 'Ahrar, I have nothing to do with this…' They said: 'Don't give us this Ahrar bullshit. You are either Marada or Phalange; which one is it?' I said: 'Ahrar…' They said: 'Marada or Phalange'? I said no more. I didn't know what to say. So they took me for a Phalangist and finished me off. (18)

The second poster (*Fig. 3.11*) appears on the screen after this incident, and Rabih tells the audience that he decided to leave the war, and Ahrar.

> So I toss down my weapon and walk away. I take one step and then another. My supervisor calls my name. I turn around. 'Tfeh!' he spits in my face, and fires his handgun. The bullet enters through my right eye and lodges itself in my skull, prompting my instant death. (19)

The same image of Rabih is shown in both posters, although the circumstances of each death are different. First, he dies because Marada mistook him for a Phalangist, and second, his party supervisor is upset with him for quitting fighting and therefore shoots him. The slogans, which are quite cynical, are different. Rabih

Fig. 4.23: Maroun Baghdadi, *Little Wars*, 1982, Film, 108 min, Courtesy of Sorayya Baghdadi.

is labelled as 'Died for Truth' in his first death and 'Died in Battle to Defend the Party' in his second. To have died for Ahrar is a truth claim that corresponds to the storyline of the play in Rabih's first death and is therefore true in the context of *Nancy*. Rabih died because he was honest about his party affiliation. This, however, is not the case with his second death, where he died neither in battle nor for the party but was killed by the party. This shows that a truth claim has to correspond not to the actual events but rather to how truth is presented and how the photograph is contextualised.

Rabih existed in front of the camera and left an indexical trace, and his image shows him as iconic, as lifelike as possible. But even when the photograph is made to speak, its truth claim can be false. Truth is fabricated, as the re-use of the same photograph for two different deaths demonstrates.

The 'fabrication of truth'[352] is also revealed by *Nancy* because the play presents the faces of living actors as martyrs. Of course, their photographs on the screens prove that they are emanations of light in front of the camera, depicted as realistically as possible. But Rabih, Hatem, Ziad, and Lina are still alive. Outside the context of *Nancy*, they are not martyrs, although their faces are presented as such in the photographs in the posters of the play.

Displaying the face of a living person as the face of a martyr was already practised during the *Wars*. At the end of the movie *Little Wars* (1982), the late film director Maroun Baghdadi shows one of the protagonists, the photographer Nabil, taking a photograph of his face with his analogue camera and then developing it multiple times in a darkroom. Nabil then creates his own martyr posters in the same standardised format as martyr posters he had seen on the streets earlier in the movie. A black-and-white photograph is depicted in front of a black background, and a slogan below the photograph announces 'Martyr Nabil Srour'. Nabil puts up his martyr posters on the walls of a room, even using a ladder to reach the ceiling (*Fig. 4.23*). The spectators see the living photographer covering every inch of the room with posters that announce that he is dead.[353]

352 I take this phrase from Mroué and Khoury, 'Three Posters', 185.

353 Lina Khatib also discusses this scene in *Lebanese Cinema: Imaging the Civil War and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 62. She does not read the scene as a critique of martyrdom but interprets it as the merging of Nabil's body with the city.

Inhabitants also features an obviously living person next to a poster announcing his martyrdom when Mroué inserts his own face into a Hezbollah martyr template. In doing so, he shows how easily a photograph of a face, as a lasting trace of someone who has been in front of the camera but is still alive, can at least technically become the face of a martyr and therefore establish a truth claim that is not true (*Fig. 3.4*). This notion has already appeared in *Three Posters*, when Mroué, at the beginning of the performance, introduces himself in a video on a screen as the martyr Khaled Rahal (*Fig. 3.1*) and claims that this video was made during the preparation for a martyrdom operation. Mroué is presented as a martyr, and, as Elias writes, the spectators—only the audience outside of Lebanon, I would say, because the Beiruti audience knew Mroué as an actor—is made to believe that they are watching a video of the recent past.[354] However, the foreign spectators realise that what they saw was not a video taken during the *Wars* by a martyr-to-come, but a live transmission from an adjacent room by a living performer, only when a door is opened and Mroué enters the stage. As Maaike Bleeker writes, Mroué's

> staging also draws attention to the performativity of this truth—in other words, that this truth is not a matter of a reality of which the video recording is a representation but instead, that the fabrication of this truth happens in the image, as a result of its virtual, phenomenal appearance to a beholder. At the moment of seeing, the images will produce the truth about the speaker, a truth that does not even exist yet at the time of their recording.[355]

Although Mroué announces himself as the martyr Rahal, supported by the evidence of the indexical and iconic image, he is neither dead nor Rahal.[356] The image is used for a fabricated truth claim and therefore *Three Posters* raises the question of which indexical and iconic images are true and which are not, and thus of how credible claims of martyrdom are. This is comparable to Rabih's second death for Ahrar in *Nancy*. He did indeed die in the storyline of the play, but this was not for the party—it was because of the party.

Although they say they are dead and they are supported by martyr posters that include their faces, the actors of *Nancy* are alive. Similarly, in *Little Wars*, Nabil is not a shahid, he is clearly alive, as he plasters his own martyr posters on the walls. In this way, then, in *Inhabitants*, *Nancy*, and *Three Posters*, Mroué, like Baghdadi during the *Wars*, questions the reliability of the image through his presence on the

354 Elias, *Posthumous Images*, 82.

355 Maike Bleeker, 'Performing the Image: Rabih Mroué's Lecture-Performances', in Hlavajova and Winder, *Rabih Mroué*, 196.

356 Videos are, like photographs, indexical and iconic.

stage. He has been in front of the camera and left a trace, but when this trace is put into the context of being a martyr, the truth claim is wrong.[357]

Finally, it should also be mentioned that presenting the face of someone who is alive as a martyr is a certain taboo in Lebanon, as Fadi Toufiq told me about *Nancy*:

> It is really offending to make your image as a martyr, if you are Lebanese and you believe in this martyr issue. People would feel offended if someone is playing this image and is making a theatre and is making fun of these things. *Nancy* was not agreeing with the culture the posters come from; it was a kind of response to this culture by overloading the use of it everywhere, whenever we had the chance.[358]

Nancy, along with *Three Posters and Inhabitants*, is breaking social taboos by portraying living actors as martyrs, as Baghdadi had already done during the Wars. By doing so, as well as by re-using the same photograph for different deaths, *Nancy* demonstrates that an indexical and iconic image cannot establish a truth claim on its own, and that truth, even when supported by photographic evidence, should always be questioned.

4.2.3 Any Picture: The Photographic Image of the Martyr as a Currency

The presentation of the face of a living person as the image of a martyr and the reuse of the same photographs for different deaths also reveal the arbitrariness of the face that is in the poster. Of course, for the family of the martyr, it is indeed important that the photograph depicts the relative. This is something that Elias Khoury reflects on in his novel *White Masks* (1981), which constitutes one of the earliest critiques of martyrdom among cultural practitioners in Lebanon. The protagonist of Khoury's book is Ahmad Khalil Jaber, whose son joined the militia of the LCP at the beginning of the *Wars* and died shortly thereafter. The father then continued to live with the face of his dead son in the martyr poster as if he were still alive.[359]

For the party, unlike for the relatives, it is not of primary importance whose face is shown, but it does matter that there is a face in the poster. Any face. This effectively converts the photograph of the ordinary martyr into a form of currency,

357 This was practised not only by Mroué and the other actors of *Nancy*. Maasri mentions that she met a poster designer for a party and that this individual had designed a martyr poster for himself (Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 88).

358 Toufiq, Zoom, 6 May 2021.

359 For the novel, see Sonja Mejcher-Atassi, 'The Martyr and His Image: Elias Khoury's al-Wujuh al-bayda' (The White Faces)', in *Martyrdom in Literature: Visions of Death and Meaningful Suffering in Europe and the Middle East from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Friederike Pannewick (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004); Naeff, *Precarious Imaginaries*, 118–20.

to which also *Nancy* points to by labelling Hatem as the 'Price of Victory' in a poster (*Fig. 3.20*). If one party can offer more martyrs than another, they demonstrate that they are willing to pay a higher price for their cause than their rivals are, which heightens the militia's credibility.[360]

In *Inhabitants*, Mroué comments on a line of Hezbollah martyr posters that he saw on lampposts in the Dahiyeh after the 2006 Tammuz War (*Fig. 3.2*).

> They are hanging on a boulevard, and not in an alley or street where they can be looked at by passers-by. Instead, they are spread in the middle of this wide boulevard, whose mission is to facilitate the flow of traffic; slowing down is not allowed, and there is no walking space for passers-by. The only probable way for us to see one frame, in a clear manner, is either to run very fast, or to drive, while looking at the posters. […] And since the frames are all similar, except for the head and the name, we end up seeing only one, still image; the image of the martyr Mujahid, in the body of a warrior, without a name or face. The speed of motion will erase both the names and the faces.[361]

Fig. 4.24: Rabih Mroué, *The Inhabitants of Images*, 2008, Non-Academic Lecture, Courtesy of the Artist.

Mroué addresses the impossibility of studying a poster of a singular martyr, as these posters are only visible when driving by. Because of the speed, one sees a repetition of the same image. Individual facial traits and names get lost in motion. It does not matter whose face is on the poster, as what was there in front of the camera is no longer visible.

Mroué's words are first accompanied by a photograph of the boulevard with the martyr posters (*Fig. 3.2*). The image that immediately follows shows these same martyrs with spotlit faces, thereby rendering them faceless (*Fig. 4.24*). This seems to be a clear comment on the index, which is reduced to the light. Iconicity in the sense of who this person was and what this person looked

360 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 87.

361 Rabih Mroué, 'The Inhabitants of Images', in *Rabih Mroué: Image(s), mon amour FABRICATIONS*, ed. CA2M (Madrid: Centro de Art dos de Mayo, 2013), 353–54. Keti Chukhrov, in "To Deserve' the Event: On Rabih Mroué's Poetics of Performing', in Hlavajova and Winder, *Rabih Mroué*, 156, wrongly labels them as suicide martyrs: they were Hezbollah fighters but did not conduct martyrdom operations.

Fig. 4.25: Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige in Collaboration with Ahmad Gharbieh, *…A Faraway Souvenir*, 2001–07, Lambada Print, 100 x 600 cm, Courtesy of the Artists.

like becomes secondary. It matters only that there has been someone in front of the camera who has left a trace produced by light and therefore testifies that the man—as the poster tells us via its logo, which is not hidden by light in the second image—has died for Hezbollah. The photograph thereby acts as supporting evidence for Hezbollah's truth claim, which is the quantity of the human price the party is willing to pay in its fight against the Israeli Army.

Hadjithomas/Joreige made a similar observation in their project *…A Faraway Souvenir* (2001–07). The artists photographed images of martyrs on lampposts on a road lined with shuhada in Ouzaï, which is in the sphere of influence of Hezbollah and Amal (*Fig. 4.25*). Usually this road is not traversed on foot and is accessed only by car. When driving, the faces of the martyrs, as in Mroué's example in the Dahiyeh, fly by and are not clearly visible. One cannot stop and look at the images, as one would hinder traffic; furthermore, being remarkably interested in the posters would draw suspicion.[362]

362 Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, 'A State of Latency', 2001, https://sc-uat-bucket.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/642bcabac6c54936c6c7b553a60057e0.pdf.

Lines of martyrs, such as those on Ouzaï and in the Dahiyeh, show off the scale of sacrifice—or, in other words, how much the party was willing to 'pay'. For the party, it is important that there is a photograph on the poster, which, by its indexicality, proves that the martyr has really given his life for the party, whose logo establishes the truth claim and therefore can, in contrast to the photograph, not be exchanged. Iconicity is secondary, as the face on the poster could be any face, turning the martyr into a currency.

As Gade has mentioned, this currency notion is also addressed in *Nancy* because the play shows how militias claimed ownership in a competition for martyrs,[363] as a death of Ziad demonstrates. At that point in the play, Ziad is a member of the LCP and tells the audience the following:

> We gather in the square. They split us up into small units combining several members from different parties. We board the jeeps and on our way over, they brief us on the operation: We are to attack the town of Aishiyeh. […] On November 9, 1976, before reaching Aishiyeh, our convoy is ambushed […] Our jeep is hit and all the passengers die, myself included. In a matter of days our photos are published under the name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. This time my parents flip for real: How dare a Palestinian organization appropriate my death! They attempt the impossible to recover my body—but this time they fail. My body remains on the battlefield, counted among the Palestinians. (16)

The poster that accompanies the anecdote consists of a bright background with a photograph of the actor standing with crossed hands, looking towards the left (*Fig. 3.33*). Slogans written in black are visible above and below the image and inside a turquoise-blue stripe. Ziad is labelled as a martyr of the PFLP and as a martyr of the LCP. Above the photograph, two symbols are visible: the PFLP's logo on the right and a hammer and a sickle on the left, pointing to the LCP. Thus, the image contradicts Ziad's narrated claim that the PFLP fully appropriated Ziad's death from their allies, the LCP. Also, the design of the poster corresponds to LCP rather than to PFLP posters, because it is similar to a serial format used by the Communists at the end of the 1980s (*Figs. 3.60–3.61*).

Ziad's martyr poster could be read as a layer added to the text of the play. It shows not only who claimed ownership over his death (the PFLP), but also for which party the actor wanted to die (the LCP). This example demonstrates that the poster's function extends beyond being solely an obituary for Ziad; otherwise, it would be irrelevant which party he died for, and which symbols would be on the poster. It would have been crucial only that he had ceased to exist as an individual.

363 Gade, 'Learning to Live', 338.

Later in *Nancy*, Ziad faces a similar problem. In 1984, he was a member of Amal. After hearing of the existence of Hezbollah, then still a clandestine group, he grows inspired, as he tells the audience:

> Unfortunately, I couldn't find out who these heroes were, or who their organisation was… However, they did make the homeland seem bigger in my eyes. And so I decided to offer my homeland something worthwhile by pulling a martyr number in the South, and blowing myself up at an Israeli checkpoint by the Awali River. I reach the checkpoint all belted up and ready to go, but one of the enemy soldiers appears to be on me, and I get self-conscious… Before I can push the button, I get a bullet in the head from an Israeli soldier, killing me on the spot. Obviously I don't blow up—not even close. As a result, my body remains in Israeli custody for a year. (27)

Ziad's unsuccessful martyrdom operation is accompanied by a poster issued by Amal, showing Ziad in a black suit and white shirt, looking towards the viewer (*Fig. 3.36*). As discussed in 3.5.3, this image is a cross-appropriation of a Hezbollah poster (*Fig. 3.71*), but the Amal logo is added, which shows that Amal counts Ziad's martyrdom as theirs.

The story of Ziad continues as he tells the audience:

> In December 1985, during a hostage exchange with Israel, my body is somehow delivered to the so-called Party of God or Hizbullah… Prior to the burial, however, there is a minor security incident between the Amal Movement and the Party of God over my dead body: 'His body belongs to us!' —'No way, it belongs to us and us only!' A mini-clash breaks out, at the end of which Amal managed to retrieve my body. (27)

In this passage, Ziad narrates how martyrs were fought over. Although he was clearly a member of Amal, Hezbollah took advantage when given a body by mistake and did not return it to Amal, who then had to claim 'ownership' of 'their' shahid.

Such incidents of appropriating martyrs did occur during the *Wars* and still occur today. One example is Bilal Fahs, who in 1984 detonated a car bomb in an Israeli convoy, killing himself and probably twenty Israeli soldiers.[364] The eighteen-year-old Fahs stated in his last will that he wanted to be buried in a green grave inscribed with the word Amal. This clearly indicates that he wanted to die for this party. However, from time to time, Hezbollah claims that Fahs is their martyr.[365]

364 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 214–15 and 255–58. The number of Israelis killed varies depending on who narrates the incident. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 38 wrongly claims that Fahs was a member of the LCP. A poster commemorating Fahs's death was issued by Amal; see Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 94.

365 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 256–60.

Fig. 4.26: Harakat Amal (@amalmovementlebanon), 'Istishahid Ahmad Qassir', Instagram, 10 November 2020.

Fig. 4.27: Harakat Amal (@amalmovementlebanon), 'Shahid Khaled Alwan', Instagram, 24 September 2020.

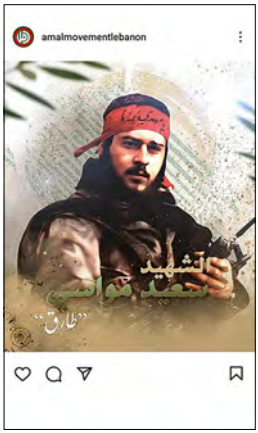

Fig. 4.28: Harakat Amal (@amalmovementlebanon), 'Shahid Said Muwasi', Instagram, 1 January 2021.

Amal also hijacks martyrs who have died for other groups. Scrolling through their Instagram page, I encountered the face of fifteen-year-old Ahmad Qassir (*Fig. 4.26*). He drove a car into an Israeli Army post in 1982 and is considered Hezbollah's first istishahid, although Hezbollah, which was then still an underground organisation, only claimed responsibility for this incident two years later.[366] Also, Khaled Alwan, a SSNP martyr, appears on Amal's page (*Fig. 4.27*), and so does Said Muwasi (*Fig. 4.28*), who as we have seen in *Figure 4.11* was a Hezbollah martyr. All three men are labelled as a martyr, and their online posters include their death dates and commemorative slogans. The party affiliations are not mentioned, instead, a non-coloured outline of the Amal logo is inserted on the lower left-hand side of each image. Qassir, Alwan, and Muwasi are presented as having died for Amal. They, of course, did not.

The unclarities about the ownership of Ziad's martyrdoms in *Nancy*, first between the PFLP and the LCP and later between Amal and Hezbollah, are a comment on the practice of hijacking martyrs, which was and is exercised by the sectarian groups. Furthermore, these two examples, as Gade writes, suggest that *Nancy* employs 'the cynical 'appropriation logic' of the political parties ad absurdum', with

366 Lina Khatib, Dina Matar, and Alef Alshaer, 'From the Invasion to the Liberation: Communicating Hizbullah's Political Repertoire, 1982–2000', in *The Hizbullah Phenomenon: Politics and Communications*, eds. Lina Khatib, Dina Matar, and Alef Alshaer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 56; Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 94; Straub, *Das Selbstmordattentat*, 73.

Mroué and Toufiq effectively managing 'to shed light on the way martyr posters have been intentionally fabricated as 'documents of commitment', ultimately aiming at affirming the representations of reality – the 'truths', if you will – propagated by the parties'.[367]

The photograph of Ziad in his poster (*Fig. 3.36*) issued by Amal seems to confirm Amal's ownership of his death. On the other hand, in *Figure 3.33*, we also see that the poster's photograph only testifies that a martyrdom took place, but not for which party. By inserting symbols of both groups, Ziad, unlike on the textual plane, is made a martyr of the PFLP and the LCP, as both groups claimed to create truth and appropriate his martyrdom. This is similar to what Amal does when they show images of martyrs who died for the SSNP and Hezbollah on their Instagram page. By adding the Amal logo to the posters, their truth claims are altered without any change in the indexicality or iconicity of the photograph.

In summary, there are at least two ways to turn the shahid into a currency that shows a party's commitment to a cause. The first is to ignore the martyrs' individualities and turn them into non-iconic but indexical images of the party, as reflected in *Inhabitants* and *…A Faraway Souvenir*. The second is to insert the indexical and iconic image in a new truth claim, as addressed in *Nancy*.

4.2.4 Shifting the Truth Claim: The ID Photograph Turns Into the Image of a Martyr and the Martyr Poster Migrates from the Wall to the Archive

Truth claims are not fixed and can fluctuate while the indexicality and iconicity of the image remain unchanged. Because most of the posters of *Nancy* show headshots, which are typically employed for identity cards, the play reflects the fact that the photographs used in martyr posters were—except for those issued after martyrdom operations—not taken on the occasion of martyrdom; instead, they were usually re-used ID photographs. This means the purpose of the photograph changed. Instead of serving as a tool for identification, it functioned to announce a martyr. Furthermore, today, many of the posters that were issued during the *Wars* are no longer hanging on the walls in the streets but are instead housed in archives. These posters have turned from a means of visual politics into historical documents.

Iconicity is crucial in ID photographs because they should depict the facial features of the person as closely to their appearance as possible. As the photographer Georges Azar put it: 'there is a reason your passport has a photograph of you and not a written description or a poem'.[368] *Nancy* acknowledges that the ID photo-

367 Gade, 'Learning to Live', 338.

368 Maya Wakim, 'Civil War Photographer Tells the Stories Your History Books Don't Acknowledge', *Beirut Today*, 15 April 2019, https://beirut-today.com/2019/04/15/civil-war-photographer/.

graph becomes a politicised image only by recontextualisation. In the beginning of the play, ID images of the four actors (*Figs. 3.5, 3.17, 3.29, 3.41*) appear in a decorative white frame next to each other on all four screens.[369] Alongside these images, the actors introduce themselves with their names, places of residence, and, if applicable, places of origin:

> **Hatem**: My name is Hatem Imam; resident of Tariq el Jdideh; Beirut; originally from Tripoli.
> **Rabih**: I'm Rabih Mroué; resident of Jbeil; originally from Hadath.
> **Ziad**: Ziad Antar; from the South; from Kfar Kila, Marjeyoun District.
> **Lina**: Lina Saneh; I'm from Mazraa. (13)

This sequence is followed by the same four ID images on the screens, but now with the addition of the symbols of the party to which each actor belongs. These symbols appear below the photographs and the corresponding party names are written in black letters above the photographs: for Hatem, the Morabitoun; for Ziad, the LCP; for Rabih, Ahrar; and for Lina, the SSNP (*Figs. 3.6, 3.18, 3.30, 3.42*). The text that accompanies these images runs as follows:

> **Rabih**: In 1973, I joined a military training camp with the Tigers of the Ahrar Party […]
> **Ziad**: I joined the war informally, before becoming a proper party man. I fought for the Communist Party… I then applied for membership and became a comrade.
> **Hatem**: When the war first broke out, I was with the Morabitun. […]
> **Lina**: When the war broke out, I was fighting amongst the ranks of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. (14–15)

In this way, the photographs first help establish a truth claim that highlights the individual identities of the actors before the additions turn them into sectarian identities. These eight pictures are not martyr posters but an overture to them, as the images show that the photograph becomes something else through the addition of further elements. That ID photographs are transformed into images of martyrs is addressed in another sequence of *Nancy*, right after the appearance of Ziad's two ID photographs. A fragment of an application form for the LCP appears on the screen above Ziad's head (*Fig. 3.31*). On the upper left, part of a hammer and a sickle are visible, and on the right, a photograph that has a decorative white frame and shows Ziad in a white shirt with curly hair, beard, and sunglasses is clipped to the form. From the text uttered by Ziad, we learn that it was only after his first death fighting with the LCP that he officially joined the party: 'when I died, they asked me to fill out an application to become an official comrade of the Communist Par-

369 On the opening scene of *Nancy*, also see Bellan, *Dismember Remember*, 155–56.

ty, to allow them to issue a black-and-white poster of me in the Party's name' (15). The LCP's motive in inviting Ziad to become a member in 1976 was to create a poster for him. This was important because, as discussed above, by issuing a martyr poster, Ziad became LCP currency and the party could claim that he was their shahid.

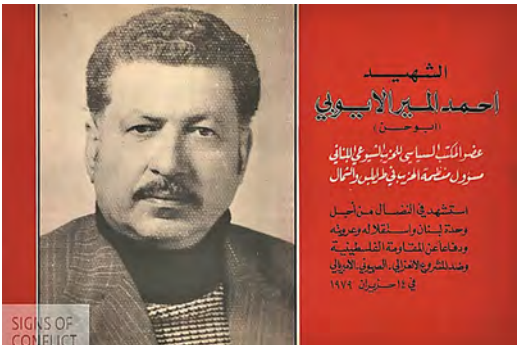

Fig. 4.29: LCP, 'The Martyr Ahmad al-Mir al-Ayubi (Abu Hassan)', 1979, Poster, 70 x 47.5 cm, LCP 21, signsofconflict.com.

Ziad also says that the poster would be issued in black and white. This is a reference to the fact that in the first two years of the *Wars*, 1975 and 1976, posters of individual martyrs were predominantly not coloured, as examples from Ahrar and the Kataeb confirm (*Figs. 3.55–3.57*). The photo that is clipped to the application form (*Fig. 3.31*) was also used for the poster that was issued for Ziad's death (*Fig. 3.32*). It shows a drawing of him in the same pose as in the previous image, with the left shoulder slightly turned towards the viewer, again with his curly hair, beard, and sunglasses in front of two snow-capped mountains and a blue sky. A further addition is a flower with a blue bullet, placed approximately at the height of his heart, severing its stem.

Although his ID photograph is transformed into a coloured figurative painting, it can still be clearly recognised. The reason his poster is not black and white might be that the underlying image—which shows a martyr of the LCP who was assassinated in 1979, Ahmad al-Mir-al-Ayubi (Abu Hassan; *Fig. 3.62*)—is apparently also made after a black-and-white photograph, which appears in another poster of al-Ayubi, which was also issued in 1979 (*Fig. 4.29*). Therefore, it could be assumed that *Nancy*, in this passage, is re-tracing the making of a painted poster during the first years of the *Wars*. It seems that the media offices of the parties had to decide: because coloured photographs were still not widespread, the parties either preserved the index by issuing a black-and-white poster, or they gave up the index and substituted the trace of its having been there with colour and the possibility of making the martyr more handsome. In the coloured version, Ayubi's eyes are slightly larger than in the photograph, with a small sparkle visible. I could not see such beautification in the depiction of Ziad, but I would suggest that the more eye-catching format of the coloured poster might also be a reason why photographs, which were then predominantly black and white, were transformed into paintings or drawings.

Therefore, *Nancy* reflects the fact that the photographs used in martyr posters are re-used ID images that either became black-and-white martyr images that preserved the index or were changed into images of martyrs by transforming the medium into a coloured painting, which made the poster more noticeable. This second change means that although the painting functioned in lieu of the index, the iconicity remained through the almost accurate depiction of the shahid.

Ziad's words accompanying the image in *Figure 3.32* are as follows:

> When I applied for Communist Party membership, I gave them a photo for my party ID. It was that same photo that appeared all over the streets of Beirut after my death, with the caption:'The Hero of Sannine: Comrade Ziad Antar'. (16)

Ziad stresses that his application photograph was used for the poster, and he therefore implies that the picture was a recycled image, originally taken for another purpose. As Maasri wrote, in these photographs, the depicted is sometimes much younger than at the time of death. Only the addition of symbols and text turns an ID image into the image of a martyr.[370] This re-use of photographs has been noted by Soha Bechara, who is still alive but could have been a martyr. In 1988, as a member of the LCP, she tried to assassinate Antoine Lahad, the head of the SLA. Bechara writes in her memoirs that she was conscious of the possible re-use of her ID photographs for her potential martyr poster, and thus on the night before the attempt, 'I burnt in secret my favorite photos of myself, fearing that they could be used by the Party for propaganda about the 'martyrs' of the resistance. But I still gave a few snapshots to Rabih'.[371] By destroying some images and giving others to her party supervisor, Bechara attempted to control the distribution of her image as a martyr, which she thought she might become.[372]

The artist and theorist Akram Zaatari writes in his essay 'All That Refuses to Vanish' (2017) about the changing contexts of the images of the men, women, and children who were killed in the Qana massacre in 1996. This was a war crime committed by the Israeli Army, which bombed a UN compound where civilians sought shelter from the Israeli air raids.[373]

370 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 89; see also Chaib, 'Hezbollah Seen', 126.

371 Soha Bechara, *Resistance: My Life for Lebanon* (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2003), 66.

372 It seems that posters of Bechara were indeed circulated after her imprisonment. Nawal Qasim Baydoun remembers that women were put in prison because they distributed Bechara's posters. See Nawal Qasim Baydoun, Michelle Hartmann, and Malek Abi Saab, *Memories of a Militant: My Years in the Khiam Women's Prison* (New York: Interlink, 2021), 99.

373 For the Qana massacre of 1996, see Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 122–24; Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 115–17.

Fig. 4.30: Doha Shams, Portrait of Victims of the Qana Massacre (Nahla Haidous), 1996, Photograph, 19 x 24 cm, 0113sh00011, Doha Shams Collection, Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation Beirut.

Zaatari recounts that the dead of Qana were buried in a mass grave, with their photographs attached. In one image depicting a woman named Nahla Haidous, plastic flowers were arranged around her face to cover her hair (*Fig. 4.30*). Flowers, as I discussed in 4.1, were a symbol used in martyr posters issued by different sects. Also, it is not unusual to link plastic flowers to the dead. Jocelyn Saab mentions in her movie *Lettre de Beyrouth* (1978) that plastic flowers were often put on martyrs' graves because they were cheaper than real flowers. According to Zaatari, the addition of the plastic flowers to Haidous's portrait happened out of urgency:

> It is a vernacular assemblage of elements that produce an object of portraiture that is photographic in its initial form, but rectified, amended or transformed by its users to suit a specific occasion. The original portrait was intended to hang at home, in the family's private space: it is not a portrait that Nahla or her family would expect to see in public.[374]

Zaatari's description also applies to the martyr posters because, as in the case of Nahla, elements were added to the photograph—not plastic flowers but the party logo and other symbols and slogans. Further, like Nahla's image, the bureaucratic ID photograph of the martyr was usually not intended to be placed on a wall in the streets, but once there, it was no longer used for identification but instead turned into a recycled image that announced a martyr. Thus, a new work emerges, as Zaatari explains: 'Every time a record is reproduced a producer has authored a new work. I'd even say that every time a record is reproduced, something in it or in the knowledge of it changes'.[375] The designer of a martyr poster is not the photographer of the ID image. Although the photograph is the same, we know through

374 Akram Zaatari, 'All That Refuses to Vanish', in *Akram Zaatari: Against Photography*, ed. Clara Plasencia (Barcelona/Duesseldorf: MACBA/K21, 2017), 99.

375 Ibid., 100.

the visual setting in which the image is embedded that it now has a different function. We no longer see the portrait photograph of a living person, but the image of someone dead.

> A photograph changes upon the vanishing of its referent. The death of a living person represents a threshold in the life of their portrait. Nahla Haidous's picture would not have hung in public had she not been killed in the Qana Massacre. When the body vanishes, each of its descriptions is recalled to fulfil a new function.[376]

In martyr posters, after the death of the person depicted, the ID photograph is no longer an ID photograph but enters the street's walls as an image of a shahid/a. Had the person stayed alive, the image would not have come into existence.

Zaatari's point also resonates with Kama Maclean, who, amidst a discussion of martyr-making in colonial India, states that the studio photograph turns into something else in the martyr poster. In my reading, this is visualised in *Nancy* in the images of Ziad in particular (*Figs. 3.31–3.32*), and by placing ID photographs at the beginning of the play for the audience to see where the photographs employed in martyr posters originate. Like the photograph of Ziad on his party application, the ID photographs are a 'prelude to martyrdom', as the photograph then 'migrates' to the poster.[377] The reproduction of the photograph no longer functions as a mode of identification; it is now a form of commemoration.

Today, Haidous's image is no longer a memorial image but part of an archival practice because her photograph is housed in the AIF. Shortly after the massacre, Zaatari travelled to Qana together with the journalist Doha Shams, who took photographs of the photographs on the mass grave and published her images in a Lebanese newspaper. Afterwards, these images were part of the 1997 festival *Les Recontres d'Arles* and then donated to the AIF.[378] Zaatari explained his interest in the image of Nahla in 2017:

376 Ibid., 103.

377 Kama Maclean, 'The Portrait's Journey: The Image, Social Communication and Martyr-Making in Colonial India', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 4 (2011): 1074.

378 Zaatari, 'All That Refuses', 100. For a description of the Doha Shams collection, see Ian B. Larson and Akram Zaatari, 'Collections of the Arab Image Foundation', in Plasencia, *Akram Zaatari*, 183.

> My interest in this picture twenty years after its original appearance has to do with the path that it took from a mere description of a woman's face, to a dressed up object on her grave, to a small image in a newspaper, to the duplication of its framed version for the AIF and its exhibition in an international photographic event, and finally its inclusion in the AIF collection. Such a genealogy traces the object's displacement from one habitat to another, cutting through multiple practices and modes of work, notably portraiture, journalism, art, inter-institutional loans and photograph preservation. The traces that transactions leave on a photographic object become part of it. A photograph is not the same twenty years later.[379]

This is also true for the martyr posters discussed above. First, an ID image is taken, then it is used to announce a martyrdom on a poster, and today, many posters of the martyrs of the *Wars* are not hanging on the walls but have found their way into archives. They no longer notify about deaths, but have instead become historical documents of the *Wars*. Zaatari explains that

> Haidous's portrait is a reproduction of a remake: a reproduction of a reproduction. Taking it as a sample item to study is getting hold of the latest generation reproduction; and consequently the portrait's belonging variously to social, journalistic, curatorial, institutional, archival and possibly artistic practices.[380]

Just as Haidous's portrait is now digitised in the AIF collection, many posters of martyrs exist in digital archives such as the AUB or signsofconflict. These are the latest-generation reproductions of reproductions, which put the posters into different frames. For example, martyr posters of different factions of the *Wars* were exhibited next to each other on one wall in the NABU Museum in Heri as part of the framework of the exhibition *Hope and Despair: When Art Reflects on War and History* (2020).[381] These posters were put on the white museum walls and therefore became part of a curatorial practice, whereas the posters visible in the Musée de l'Indépendence and in Mleeta remain in the domain of visual politics, since the displays of these two institutions—which show only Phalange/Kataeb and Hezbollah posters, respectively—belong to the context of a sectarian narration of history. Placed in archives, the posters are to be understood in the framework of academic practice, whereas in the case of *Nancy*, the posters are part of an artistic practice. Originally, martyr posters were printed for public display on streetside walls, but today many end up elsewhere. This is also made visible in *Nancy* when, at the very end of the play, unchanged martyr posters from the *Wars*—taken from Maasri's archive—pop up on all four screens.

379 Zaatari, 'All That Refuses', 99.

380 Ibid., 100–01.

381 NABU Museum, *Hope & Despair: When Art Reflects on War and History* (NABU: Heri, 2020).

The functions and truth claims of photographs change through time, while their indexicality and iconicity remain the same. Especially when the referent dies, the image turns into something else, often through the addition of elements or via a physical relocation of the picture. Nahla's image and the photographs of the martyrs in posters are no longer ID images. For the research of this book, I was mostly not looking for posters on the walls but browsing through different archives. In doing so, I realised that in some cases, there is not only a martyr image; there is another picture of the same death that shows the dead person defeated.

4.2.5 Other Types and Uses of Images of the Dead: Trophy and Accusation Images

The groups involved in the *Wars* did not always agree about whether a death was a martyrdom. Sometimes, the death of a militiaman was depicted in at least two images: first, in an image by the party he died for, where he was presented as a shahid, and second, in an image by the party that had killed him. In this second case, the picture of his death was turned into a trophy image, which acted as a counter to the heroic image of the martyr. Sometimes, the party with which the martyr was affiliated also displayed a death as an image of accusation.

This part is (except for a short discussion in 6.3) the only one in the book that includes images depicting graphic scenes in which, in contrast to most of the martyr posters, death is clearly visible. Following a classification by the semiologist Francois Jost, most of the martyr posters I have discussed until now would be termed 'images of violence', as they only suggest violence but leave it out of the frame. The dead body is not shown, but the fact that the ID photograph now acts as a martyr photograph implies that the person has died a violent death. 'Violent images', on the other hand, depict violence in a direct way.[382]

It is beyond the scope of this book to scrutinise in depth whether violent images should be distributed. I have decided to reproduce a selected set of them, which are part of my discussion, because I believe that every image that exists deserves to be shown and examined as long as it is contextualised. Joey Brooke Jakob argues that researchers should not perceive images as 'too horrific for research' but should try to understand why and for what purposes they were created.[383]

382 Cited in Emmanuel Taïeb, 'Should Images of Violence Be Shown?', *Books and Ideas* (2015), https://hal.science/halshs-01237318.

383 Joey Brooke Jakob, 'Beyond Abu Ghraib: War Trophy Photography and Commemorative Violence', *Media, War & Conflict* 10, no. 1 (2017): 91.

In a similar vein, Ariella Azoulay mentions that photography is not only what is printed on the photographic paper and suggests a methodology for dealing with violent images.

> The photograph bears the seal of the event itself, and reconstructing that event requires more than just identifying what is shown in the photograph. One needs to stop looking at the photograph and instead start watching it. The verb 'to watch' is usually used for regarding phenomena or moving pictures. It entails dimensions of time and movement that need to be reinscribed in the interpretation of the still photographic image. When and where the subject of the photograph is a person who has suffered some form of injury, a viewing of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted upon others becomes a civic skill, not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation.[384]

Following Azoulay, I will not offer detailed descriptions of violent images, as I am not publishing or discussing them for aesthetic purposes. A mere description could indeed serve a voyeuristic gaze and would be of little help in grasping the picture. Beyond what is depicted, spectators should understand the context in which the image was taken, what has happened before—in other words, how this situation came to be—and what has happened after—in other words, what was done with the photograph after it was captured on camera. In doing so, movement is inscribed into the still photograph. This is what Azoulay terms 'civic skill'.

Herta Wolf makes a similar argument in her suggestion for how to analyse exposures of pain and violence:

> it is necessary to first analyze the discursive anchoring of the images and the conditions under which they were made. Only then can the context of production and usage be examined for the specifics of the photographs in question: Who took the pictures? Why were these particular acts of violence recorded using a photographic, and thus indexical, medium? To whom are the pictures addressed? To whom are they meant to be shown? Which distribution channels will the pictures enter, and to which secondary uses will they be put? Only these questions can lead to a necessary, differentiated understanding of scenarios that are often so similar in iconographic terms.[385]

Wolf, like Azoulay, suggests focusing not on the iconography of the image but on the context in which it is embedded—in other words, under what conditions, by whom, for whom, and with what intentions the photograph was taken and distributed.

384 Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 14.

385 Herta Wolf, 'The Tears of Photography', *Grey Room* 29 (2007): 80.

Taking the thoughts of Azoulay and Wolf into account, I will not refrain from showing violent images. However, I will focus not on their aesthetic description but on the context from which they emerged and the discourse into which they were put. In the following I will first elaborate on the concept of the violent image as a trophy image, before considering its role as a counter to the heroic martyr poster. I will then discuss the accusation image as a call to arms, before finally arguing that violent images cannot create a truth claim by themselves but always need to be placed in context.

Concealed as a Press Image: The Violent Image as a Trophy Image

Nancy reflects the fact that in some cases, violent images function as trophy images under the pretext of being informative press images. The aim of trophy images is to humiliate the deceased or injured person who is depicted and to declare and celebrate victory over him and his faction. Trophy images display pride in what has been accomplished, and therefore their purpose is to be circulated.[386]

In *Nancy*, a press clipping (*Fig. 3.14*) shows a grainy black-and-white image of Rabih, who wears jeans and a white shirt with blood stains below his chest. He is led by two men in military gear on both sides, one of whom carries a rifle. A third man is visible behind Rabih. All four men are anonymised, with their eyes blacked over. The fragment of the newspaper is cropped. The headline above the image reads 'The Army Decided to…', indicating that the article is about the army's intervention in the Geagea-Hobeika conflict in 1986.

Because of the photograph's placement in a newspaper, it can be assumed that a photojournalist has captured this image of Rabih. There were several reasons why photojournalists took violent images.[387] Georges Azar, who was an active photojournalist during some years of the Wars, has suggested that one was to have 'sensational' photos to sell to dailies and magazines.

> As individual photographers, we were free to follow our interests. But the market, then and now, highly values 'bang-bang', dramatic images of violent combat. Many of us were focused on the fighting and the quest for the ultimate bang-bang image, with encouragement from our employers.[388]

386 Jakob, 'Beyond Abu Ghraib', 98–99.

387 Press photographs during the *Wars* usually appeared in black and white in the daily papers. Colour photography has been widely used since the 1990s. See Clémence Cottard Hachem and Nour Salamé, 'War Photographer: 1982–2014. A Conversation with Patrick Baz. Beirut, 2016', in *On Photography in Lebanon: Stories & Essays*, eds. Clémence Cottard Hachem and Nour Salamé (Beirut: Kaph, 2018), 326–27.

388 Michelle Woodward, 'Beirut Photographer: Interview with Georges Azar', *Jadaliyya*, 29 November 2012, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/27500.

Fig. 4.31: The Corpse of a Man Killed by the Israeli Army, 1985, Black-and-White Photograph, 23 x 18 cm, Ph: 956.9204.1, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

A photograph from 1985 (*Fig. 4.31*) seems to confirm this. It shows a dead man lying on the ground, next to his pickup, between pools of blood, a blanket, and bags of potatoes. Seven photographers with cameras in their hands are capturing the gory scene, with two gesticulating towards the photographer of the photographers.

Another reason for press photographers to take such images was to preserve evidence of what had happened. As Ramzi Haidar, a photojournalist who covered the *Wars*, told me:

> The group I belonged to was made up of people who shared my interest in documenting the war. This was the reason for photographing: to document. I thought it is necessary for the next generation to document. Some of my colleagues were documenting with words, others were preserving the archives themselves. The idea of having propaganda or using the images to serve ideas was more elaborated or clear after 1982, after the Israeli invasion of Beirut, and by then, the local photographers and the national agencies were more present, and people started to understand there is a culture of the image. It can be used. And photographers knew their images would be used in this direction or that direction.[389]

389 Ramzi Haidar, personal conversation with the author, 12 March 2020.

While Haidar claims that at the beginning of the *Wars* the preservatory approach was foregrounded, this changed with the Israeli invasion in 1982, when greater consciousness of the political function of the image developed.

At the same time, no photograph is purely objective, as Aline Manoukian, one of the most well-known photographers of the *Wars*, noted:

> Yes, you do try to be objective, to stand back and tell the story. But the choice of whether to release the shutter in front of one scene and not another is a personal decision. You interpret the scene, you frame it, while choosing to focus on one element and to place others in the middle ground or the background or leave them out altogether. How you represent an image is a subjective decision taken even before you crop and prepare it for publication. In my opinion, a photograph is subjective. It's not the truth. It's an interpretation of truth.[390]

A photograph shows what has taken place in front of the camera, but simultaneously, a photograph is only a fragment of the entire scene, chosen by the photographer for reasons ranging from commercial to archival to political. By making this choice, the photographer has a share in creating the truth claim of the image.

In the case of the image in the press clipping that accompanies a death of Rabih in *Nancy*, it can therefore be assumed that the photographer had a certain interest in taking a sensational image of the defeat of the Hobeika faction and might have been a sympathiser of Geagea. The newspaper was issued on 27 September 1986 and mentions the chasing of prisoners and bombing in Beirut. This corresponds to the storyline of *Nancy*, as Rabih tells the audience while the press clipping of his humiliation (*Fig. 3.14*) is visible on the screen above his head:

> On September 27, 1986—a Saturday—we charged into East Beirut from the West. We closed in on them from every side, and all our new allies came to fight with us—Amal, the Progressive Socialists, the Nationalists and the Communists—backed by Syrian artillery… We got to the heart of Achrafieh and came within a hair's breadth of conquering the entire area of East Beirut and ending the battle in our favour… That is, if the Lebanese Army hadn't stepped in at the last minute to back up the Lebanese Forces. So instead, the battle ended in their favour. I got stuck in Achrafieh. They grabbed me and squeezed hard—it was like getting caught in the jaws of an enormous pair of pliers. They beat me to a pulp; they dragged me through the streets, they disgraced me, they humiliated me, and they published my photo in all the papers. They ruined my career as a fighter… Finally, away from the eyes of the media, they took me into an alley and liquidated me. (28)

390 Clémence Cottard Hachem and Nour Salamé, 'Photographing War: A Conversation with Aline Manoukian. Beirut, 2017', in Cottard Hachem and Salamé, *On Photography*, 278.

First, Rabih narrates how the battle was lost and then how he was caught and tortured by his opponents. This torture was not only physical but also included the display of his injured body in pain in the media. The press clipping is therefore a trophy image, which we learn through the contextualising anecdote in which Rabih, while listing the cruelties he experienced from the Geagea faction, mentions the publication of the photograph.

In this case, the fact that the image of Rabih appeared in the press does not contradict its status as a trophy image, as photojournalists, via their choices of what to capture, sided with one faction to varying degrees. A photograph displayed under the pretext of political information could be intended to intimidate supporters of the humiliated person who was depicted and to announce victory.[391] This is also mentioned in the text of *Nancy*, when Rabih says that 'they'—referring to his 'enemies'—published his photograph.[392]

This death of Rabih is not accompanied by a martyr poster, but that does not necessarily mean his faction denies that he is a shahid. Maybe a poster was produced for him but was lost over time; today's archives do not include instances of all martyr posters. Or maybe, as his death happened in 1986, when the production of posters among Christian parties had already declined, no poster was issued for him at all. In my reading, the absence of a martyr poster combined with the presence of a trophy image also reflects the different types of imagery that could potentially remain or not remain after one's death.

The trophy image is distributed to display disgrace and to show the defeated other. It is the antithesis of the image of the heroic martyr. This is echoed elsewhere in *Nancy*, where both the martyr image and the trophy image are addressed.

The Trophy Image as a Counter-Image to the Heroic Martyr Poster

After having died as an Ahrar fighter in the Holiday Inn during the Battle of the Hotels, Rabih tells the audience that he

> can confirm one thing: What I read in the papers about my own death was a hundred per cent true. They wrote: 'One of the fighters was seen plummeting from the 13th floor of the Holiday Inn. The casualty was identified as one of the Ahrar fighters'. (17)

391 This line of argumentation is also made by Wolf, who uses the examples of the dead sons of Saddam Hussein. See Wolf, 'Tears', 73.

392 However, Rabih's killing took place hidden from the camera's eye. *Fig. 3.14* is an original clipping that appeared in the papers in 1986 and is the only image in *Nancy* that presents someone else as an actor.

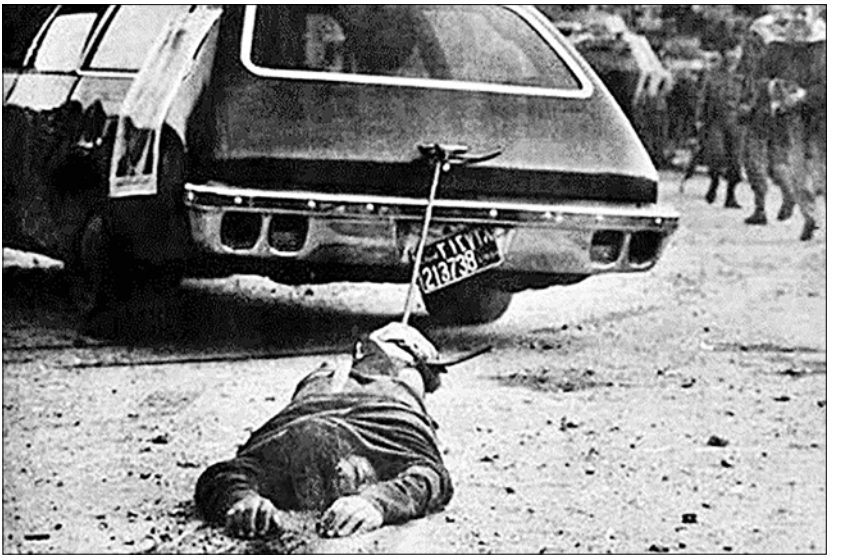

Fig. 4.32: Georges Semerdjian, Rightist Fighter Trailed in Beirut Streets, 1976 (?), Photograph, Courtesy of Maria Semerdjian.

The visual that accompanies this text (*Fig. 3.8*) shows Rabih standing in front of the Holiday Inn, looking towards the viewer and wearing a tight T-shirt that exposes his bare arms. The logo on the upper-left corner of the poster indicates it was issued by Ahrar. On the lower right, a slogan in white letters reads 'The Martyr Hero Rabih Mroué'. When we consider all these elements in combination, this poster presents Rabih as having fought and died heroically for Ahrar. No trace of his violent death is visible. Only the text of *Nancy* that accompanies this poster addresses the existence of a counter-image.

When reading the anecdote of *Nancy* quoted above, an iconic image from the *Wars* that shows a dead man being dragged behind a car comes to mind immediately (*Fig. 4.32*).[393] This fits Azar's observation that certain photojournalistic images are recallable in an instant in the visual memory of those familiar with the imagery of the *Wars*. As Azar explains: 'you say the picture of the man playing the piano and I know exactly what you are talking about. You just need to say it and with iconic photographs like that, it just somehow sears itself into your consciousness'.[394] Although

393 This image is also re-enacted and turned into a moving image in Maroun Baghdadi's film *Hors la Vie* (1991).

394 Beirut Banyan, 'Ep.94 (Audio): Photography & Photojournalism with Georges Azar', *YouTube*, 14 December 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgRFvQftNkM.

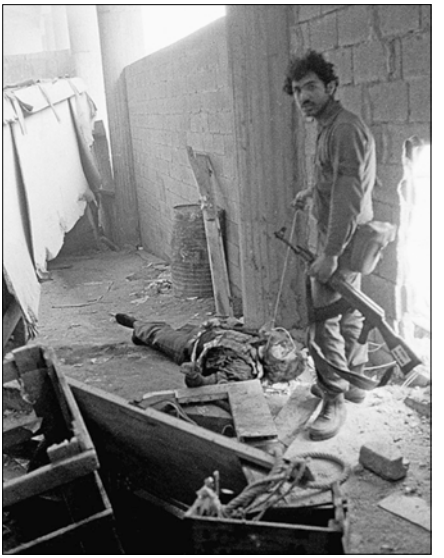

Fig. 4.33: Morabitoun Militiaman and Dead Phalangist, 1976, Photograph, Courtesy of Borell/SIPA.

Azar was describing the well-known image of a fighter playing a piano,[395] his description of instant relation is also true for the image of the man who is dragged behind a car.[396] In terms of the current discussion, we can say that *Nancy* here addresses the notions of image and counter-image. On the one hand, there is the heroic poster of Rabih, which is shown on the screen in the play. On the other hand, the textual plane simultaneously evokes another photograph, which the Beiruti audience likely knew and could recall from their visual memory. This image shows Rabih not as a heroic martyr but as a defeated other.

By staging death in this manner, the enemy seems to be deprived of his humanity.[397] When seeing this photograph and thinking it along with other violent images of the Holiday Inn—which show Morabitoun militiamen posing with their rifles and looking towards the camera next to apparently arranged bodies of dead Phalangists lying on the ground with ropes that are tied around their necks and held by the Morabitoun fighters (*Fig. 4.33*)—scenes of a hunter next to their dead prey come to my mind.[398] These images not only manifest Sontag's argument that 'to display the dead, after all, is what the enemy does',[399] but also, as Jakob writes, visualise the power of the subject who poses and the powerlessness of the object that is posed, producing the 'trophied effect'.[400] The intention of such images is to intimidate the Phalange and clearly communicate who won the Battle of the Hotels. Also, the dead man dragged behind the car and the press clipping of Rabih's humiliation display the dead or the soon-to-die but already defeated enemy. Rabih was led to pose. He has no agency over his own body-movement; therefore, power relations are made visible.

395 For this photograph, see Buchakjian, 'Habitats Abandonnés', 109–10.

396 I will return to this image in 4.5.

397 Wolf, 'Tears', 73.

398 There are much more graphic images of dead Phalangists in the Holiday Inn. See Joseph G. Chami, *Le Mémorial de la Guerre: 1975-1990* (Beirut: Chemaly & Chemaly, 2003), 54–55.

399 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 55.

400 Jakob, 'Beyond Abu Ghraib', 96–98.

There are also instances of the *Wars* that have the image and the counter-image. For example, the Chamoun family, who were assassinated in 1990 and whose martyr image (*Fig. 4.19*) I will discuss in 4.4, is also depicted in counter-images. The body of the dead Dany Chamoun was published in the *New York Times*, and a simple Google search gives access to photographs showing his dead children and wife in pools of blood.[401]

Trophy images are images taken and distributed by the parties of the killers. These images are void of heroism, rather, the deceased is depicted as a defeated enemy, whose death should be celebrated and displayed. As discussed above, such pictures were often captured not by the parties themselves but by photojournalists who, by distributing them, become accomplices to the winning party. This is because photojournalists were usually the first to be taken to scenes of death and destruction by the militias that won the battle. This also happens in Baghdadi's *Hors La Vie* (1991). In the movie's opening scene, a photojournalist is urged to take a picture of a lifeless hanged body, which he does, although he is disgusted by doing so and destroys the camera roll afterwards.[402] To destroy the picture, and therefore to lose it, is a strategy employed to avoid becoming a militia accomplice.

The lost image is also addressed in *Nancy* in relation to another incident, which happened in 2003. Rabih says:

> I joined the South Lebanon Army under the command of General Antoine Lahad, where they assigned me to the National Guard. I stayed there for eight years, moving back and forth between Hasbaya and Marjeyoun… Until they transferred me to the Sujd base, where I was killed in a Hizbullah offensive on August 12, 1998… Five years later, I watched this operation on a Hizbullah video that I came across by chance while browsing through the Arab Book Fair in Beirut. I watched the tape because I wanted to see how I was killed. But, alas, I wasn't on the tape. I was really stung by this—it hurt my feelings. (32)

This passage, in which Rabih tells the audience that his death was not captured on video, is accompanied by a martyr poster (*Fig. 3.15*) that was issued by the SLA. Apparently, two images of Rabih's death exist: the poster celebrating him as a martyr and the video shot by his enemy, Hezbollah. This links with the fact that since 1986, the group has often videotaped and disseminated their operations against the Israeli occupiers and the SLA. The camcorder or, today, the mobile phone acts

401 For the assassination of the Chamoun family, see Jaber, 'Leader of a Major Christian Clan'. I am not publishing the images of the dead Chamoun family here, as they would not make the understanding of my written words clearer and, indeed, would serve nothing else but a voyeuristic gaze.

402 Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema*, 118.

as an indexical and iconic 'moving witness' to prove that Hezbollah has conducted their operation and, at the same time, offers an outlook to the future, communicating that such things could happen again. These videos establish Hezbollah's truth claim because the group controls the imagery of their operations by filming and distributing the images themselves.[403]

In the case of *Nancy*, the video of the operation appeared years later at the Arab Book Fair, but without displaying the death of Rabih. From the perspective of Hezbollah, if he had been in the video, it would have acted as a counter-image to the poster showing him as a martyr, as it would have recorded him dying and being defeated. However, for Rabih, the video would have been proof of his heroism and willingness to sacrifice himself for the cause of the SLA.

The same picture can be both a trophy image and a heroic image, depending on the intentions of the one who is reading it. The image itself is mute, it is given a voice only by those who interpret it. This is also the case for posters that show violent images and whose original purpose is to serve not as trophy images but as accusation images.

The Violent Image as Accusation Image: A Call to Arms

Violent images are not always used as trophy images but can also be employed as accusation images. As Imogen Bloomfield writes, these images should

> produce an unsustainable level of shock and reactive engagement in the […] cause. Atrocity photography therefore became an important tool in […] high-energy visual propaganda […]: the need to address and affect individuals within a collective, and to elicit and capitalise on base sentiments against an enemy.[404]

Unlike the trophy image, the accusation image is not intended to serve as a declaration of victory or as a chilling example of what will happen to the enemy. Instead, by showing a dead member of one's own group, accusation images intend to elicit shock and, in doing so, aim to motivate their audience to fight the enemy, who is presented as responsible for the commission of the hideous acts depicted.[405]

403 For a detailed analysis of the use of Hezbollah videos during operations, see Walid el Houri and Dima Saber, 'Filming Resistance: A Hezbollah Strategy', *Radical History Review* 106 (2010). The practice of filming operations is not restricted to Hezbollah, as Amal, for example, has also recorded martyrdom operations; see Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 259.

404 Imogen Bloomfield, 'Photographs of Child Victims in Propaganda Posters of the Spanish Civil War', *Modern Languages Open* 16, no. 1 (2018): 6.

405 Ibid., 6–9.

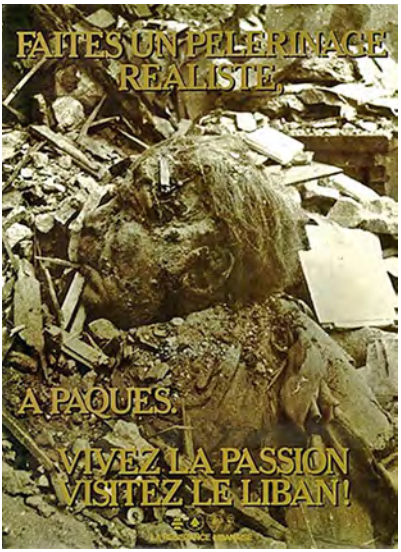

Fig. 4.34: Phalange, 'Go for a Realistic Pilgrimage at Easter. Experience the Passion, Visit Lebanon', 1978, Poster, 44 x 60 cm, WJA 7, signsofconflict.com.

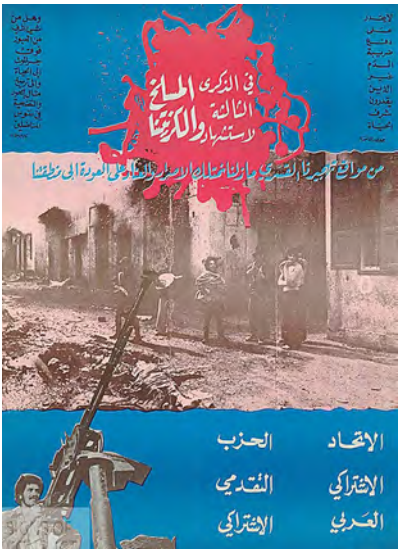

Fig. 4.35: Arab Socialist Union/PSP, 'The 3rd Annual Commemoration of the Fall of Maslakh and Karantina', 1979, Poster, 42 x 58 cm, ASH 12, signsofconflict.com.

Accusation images as such do not appear in *Nancy*, but they should be mentioned here because they are a component of the discussion about the non-truth-claiming essence of photographs and the medium's need for contextualisation. The practice of showing violent images as accusation images was employed by several groups during the *Wars*. An early example is a Phalangist poster that was issued in 1978 (*Fig. 4.34*). Its colours are dominated by golden brown, and it shows a decapitated skull lying in rubble; according to Jabre, it is a Christian civilian. The accompanying text reads, 'Go for a Realistic Pilgrimage at Easter. Experience the Passion, Visit Lebanon', thereby cynically playing on tourism posters and the narrative of Easter.[406] As discussed in 4.1, parallels between the Passion of Jesus and the suffering of the Christians of Lebanon are repeatedly drawn, and without mentioning it directly in the poster, the Syrian Army—whose shelling, according to Jabre, caused the death—is accused of the killing.[407]

406 For tourism posters in Lebanon in the 1960s, see Maasri, *Cosmopolitan Radicalism*, 25–62.

407 Jabre, *Lebanese Resistance Posters*, 10–11. Maasri does not discuss the exposure of violence in the posters but she mentions posters issued by the PLO, which show dead civilians. In this context, she argues that these images should portray the Palestinian victims and expose and condemn the aggression of the enemy (*Off the Wall*, 76–79).

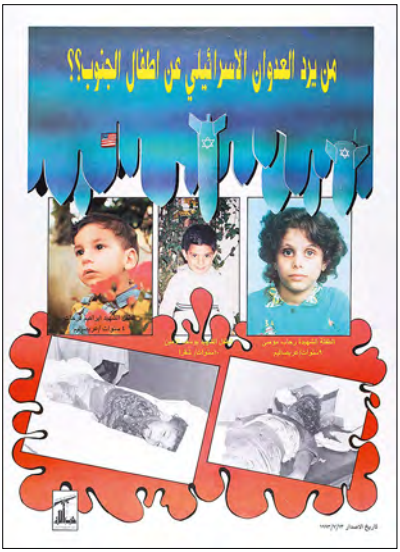

Fig. 4.36: Hezbollah, 'Who Will Respond to the Israeli Aggression on Behalf of the Children of the South??', 1993, Poster, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

One year later, the PSP and the Arab Socialist Union issued a poster that included an image that was taken during or after the massacres of Maslakh and Karantina (*Fig. 4.35*). These occurred in 1976, when the Phalange and their allies killed hundreds of unarmed, mostly Palestinian, civilians. The poster is divided into three horizontal bands: the upper band shows a blue background with a red form, apparently symbolising a pool of blood, in which white text reads: 'The 3rd Annual Commemoration of the Fall of Maslakh and Karantina'; the middle band includes a photograph of a charred dead female Palestinian body lying on the ground and, behind her, Phalange fighters celebrating her death and playing the Oud (a lute-typed instrument); and in the lower band, a fighter aims a tank's muzzle at one of the Phalangists, and this suggests that the fighter belongs to the alliance of the PSP and the Arab Socialist Union.

The photograph in the middle panel, which depicts a fragment of the massacre, was shot by Don McCullin as part of his photojournalistic trip to Lebanon.[408] However, he did not take this image in order for it to be put on a poster; it became an accusation image only through recontextualisation. This example underlines the unstable meanings of photographs. Had this image been taken by a Phalangist and distributed by right-wing Christian media, it would have turned into a trophy image. However, because it appears on a poster that was issued by the Phalange's opponents, it acts as an accusation image.

Hezbollah also uses violent images as accusation images. It does so, for instance, in a poster that was issued in 1993 and commemorates the deaths of three children killed during Israeli shelling of the South (*Fig. 4.36*). Three colour photographs show the children while alive, with captions labelling them child martyrs and providing information about their names, ages, and places of residence. Below these photographs, two black-and-white images depict two of the children

408 Cottard Hachem and Salamé, 'Photographing War', 277 and 284–85; Michael Young, 'Conscience with a Camera', *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 9 January 2017, https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/66375.

post-mortem, lying on stretchers in either a morgue or hospital. Both photographs show the results of the bombardments, as the children's organs are oozing out and their clothes are blood-soaked. The background consists of a red, relatively amorphous form, probably symbolising a pool of blood. On the bottom of the poster, the Hezbollah logo is visible (in this case in black and white) and the date of issue is indicated. On the top, blue bombs branded with the Star of David as well as the US flag are depicted falling on the children. The slogan asks, 'Who Will Respond to the Israeli Aggression on Behalf of the Children of the South??'. The poster therefore leaves no room for interpretation as to who, in Hezbollah's opinion, is responsible for the suffering. Furthermore, its intentions are linked with an observation made by Bloomfield regarding the presentation of killed children as victims in posters issued by the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. Specifically, Bloomfield notes that the depiction of the dead bodies of children usually creates stronger emotions and greater shock than the display of the dead bodies of adults, because killing children is widely perceived as beyond any red line.[409]

All three Lebanese posters I have discussed were issued by the party with which the dead were affiliated. Two of these posters (*Figs. 4.35–4.36*), either include traces of those who were responsible for the dead, such as a flag or the Phalangists, or mention the accused party in the slogan. The Phalange poster (*Fig. 4.34*) relies solely on the skull, apparently anticipating that it is common knowledge who is to be held responsible.

Violent images are used to create emotion through the exposure of the horrific deeds that the enemy has caused. The purpose of these posters is not only to grieve the killed but also to encourage people to fight against the injustice depicted. These images are a call to arms.

The three posters show a dead woman (*Fig. 4.35*), dead children (*Fig. 4.36*), or, in the Phalangist narrative, a dead civilian (*Fig. 4.34*), but no dead or mutilated militia fighters. I suggest that depicting the humiliated strong male would be a sign of defeat, whereas showing graphic images of deceased women or children is an act that accuses those who committed the murder and functions to demonstrate that there is a need for protection from 'the other'. This corresponds to Khalili's statement about the Palestinian struggle, where suffering is often presented through the faces and bodies of women and children, while the heroic fighter is remembered as a defender via the strong male body.[410]

409 Bloomfield, 'Photographs of Child Victims', 6–9.

410 Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs*, 37. Volk also made a similar observation (*Memorials and Martyrs*, 181).

Fig. 4.37: Hezbollah, 'The Fingerprints of Zionism's Barbarism Are on the Bodies of the Martyrs of Islam in Ansar Detention', Poster, 71 x 61 cm, 337-PCD2080-095, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

Fig. 4.38: SSNP, 'Halba Massacre', 2008, Poster, 49 x 69 cm, American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

Nonetheless, this is only a tendency and exceptions exist. Hezbollah, for example, issued a poster showing the photographs of four militiamen (*Fig. 4.37*), apparently dead and tortured, with one even blindfolded. Visible on the corners of the poster are ID images that show the martyrs, like the children in the Hezbollah poster (*Fig. 4.36*), while they are still alive. The text in the poster reads: 'The Fingerprints of Zionism's Barbarism Are on the Bodies of the Martyrs of Islam in Ansar Detention'. Like the image, the slogan is clearly intended to accuse those who, in the perception of Hezbollah, are responsible for the dead. In a similar vein, a poster issued by the SSNP in 2008 shows eleven party members who were killed when the Future Movement attacked the SSNP headquarters in Halba, a town in the North (*Fig. 4.38*).[411] While the ID photographs depict the men alive, the camera roll in the upper part of the poster contains gory scenes of corpses.

Photographs of dead women and children were used by various parties during the *Wars* as accusation images. These photographs showed the violence of the perceived enemy and sought to persuade their own followers to take up arms to prevent such atrocities happening in the future. In contrast, the militiamen, who should be in charge of stopping these killings, were only exceptionally shown in the posters as dead and defeated.

411 For the attack in Halba see Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 122.

Indexicality, Iconicity, and the (Non-)Truth Claim of the Violent Image

The same violent image can be used as a trophy image or as an accusation image. If the trophy image of Rabih (*Fig. 3.14*), which apparently was published by the Geagea faction under the pretext of being a press image, had been distributed by the Hobeika faction, it would have turned into an accusation image—one showing the atrocities committed by the Geagea faction—and acted as a call to arms. To understand this, one must look outside the frame, because it is only via the text of *Nancy* that we learn that the taking of this image was part of a humiliation practice.

Wolf argues that images of violence and violent images are 'unintelligible' and cannot describe or interpret what is depicted. To do so, discursive elements need to be added, and the photograph needs to be contextualised, as 'the actual referents' are 'in the discourses that influence the way they are read'.[412] Photographs are not looked at by everyone in the same way, and their meaning is not always evident or clear.[413]

This also applies to the images discussed in this subchapter. For the Phalange, the photographs of the Holiday Inn (*Figs. 4.32–4.33*) are images of horror and inhumanity executed by the Morabitoun and their allies. For the Morabitoun, these images celebrate the victory of the Battle of the Hotels. For Rabih, the lost image in Hezbollah's video would have been not what Hezbollah intended it to be, a trophy image, but an image of his heroic martyrdom. The dead woman in front of the celebrating Phalange fighters (*Fig. 4.35*) could act as a trophy image for the Phalange, but by being exposed on a poster issued by the PSP and the Arab Socialist Union commemorating the massacre, it turns into an accusation image. What is primarily important is not the intention of the photographer, but the party who issued the poster and the elements—namely, text or symbols, such as bombs or the muzzle of the gun—that have been added to make it clear that these images should accuse.

In the eyes of the Israeli Army, the photographs on the poster depicting dead Hezbollah fighters (*Fig. 4.37*) are probably images of dead terrorists, whereas for Hezbollah, they are images of the injustice that the Israeli Army executes in Lebanon. The same is true for the dead children (*Fig. 4.36*), who, in the official Israeli discourse, would probably be labelled as unfortunate civilian casualties, although some Israelis might also see the deaths of potential future Hezbollah fighters and therefore have feelings beyond simple regret. Also, the Syrian Army probably had another take on the macabre image of the skull on the Phalange poster, one that differed from that of the Lebanese Christians (*Fig. 4.34*). From the perspective of the Syrian Army, the image would not be read as depicting a civilian; but they might see a Phalangist militiaman, whose killing was necessary.

412 Wolf, 'Tears', 83.

413 Jakob, 'Beyond Abu Ghraib', 91.

Without context, these images can be both trophy images and accusation images. These pictures just tell us that someone has died. The photograph, if a witness at all, is an uninformative witness. Via its indexicality and iconicity, it can give a fragmentary impression of what has happened, but it does not tell us why. Photographs themselves do not establish a truth claim on their own but need to be put into context.

4.2.6 Uses and Abuses of Photography's Non-Truth Claim

In this part, I have first argued that, in itself, the photograph found in a martyr poster not only fails to establish a truth claim, but also is not even needed for doing so. Rather, the photograph acts as supporting evidence. The medium, due to its iconicity, shows the most lifelike version of the deceased possible, while its indexicality bears a trace of the referent. At the same time, truth claims are always constructed in photographs.

Nancy reflects the fact that photography was the primary medium employed for depicting the shahid in martyr posters of the *Wars*. However, by announcing living actors as martyrs, by the visual strategy of multiplied appropriations, and by re-using the same photograph for different deaths, *Nancy* makes us question the truth claim of the photograph of the shahid/a and reminds us that no photograph should be trusted as a proof of martyrdom. Truth can be fabricated.

By undoing the martyr's individuality, as in *Inhabitants* and *...A Faraway Souvenir*, and by inserting images into a false truth claim, as in *Nancy*, it becomes clear that the photograph's application to the poster exceeds the function of pure commemoration. The militias turned the faces of the martyrs into a currency, meaning they showed off—in competition with other parties—how much human capital they had paid for their cause. For the sectarian groups, it was important only that there was *a* face in the poster. It did not matter *whose* face it was.

Most images in *Nancy*'s posters, like those in posters of the *Wars*, are re-used ID photographs. By migrating the photograph from an identity card to a martyr poster, another truth claim—not the identification of a person but the announcement of a martyr—was created. After the death of an individual, without any change, a new image emerges from an existing image because the image now fulfils a new function. Through time, the purpose of the picture changes. Today, martyr posters from the *Wars* are often found as historical documents in archives and museums or are used in art projects, such as *Nancy*, instead of acting as visual politics on the walls.

The instability of indexicality and iconicity is also visible in violent images. The same photograph can act as both a trophy image and an accusation image, depending on who is publishing the picture with which intentions, as *Nancy* partly reflects

via a press clipping showing an atrocity. Photographs prove that the depicted scene or individual has existed in front of the camera, but they cannot produce a narrative on their own. To do so, they need a context in which they are made sense of—in other words, a context in which a truth claim is established. This also applies to photographs of martyrs. They do not tell anything without being placed in the context of the poster, but they are a necessary element of the poster because the photograph is the locus of emotion. However, there is the exception of celebrity martyrs, well-known dead people whose images create truth claims by themselves. I will discuss these pictures in the next part, where we will see that *Nancy* reflects the fact that not all deaths are remembered equally.

4.3 Constructed Nuances of Visual Memory: Hierarchies of Remembrance and the Oblivion of the Dead

There are nuances of remembrance among martyrs, and not all people who experienced a violent death are framed as shuhada. The existence of ranks among Lebanese martyrs has already been identified by Volk,[414] and has been further discussed by Bonsen. The latter distinguishes between 'civilian martyrs', who she describes as 'passive victims of the several wars and conflicts', and 'fighting martyrs', a term she applies to 'those who were actively engaged in fighting, dying in battle'. Both civilian and fighting martyrs are usually not well known, and I therefore call them ordinary martyrs. The third type of shuhada Bonsen identifies is that of 'leader martyrs', who are 'political leaders [who] have been assassinated'.[415]

We will see in this part that *Nancy* reflects on the different hierarchies in the visual memory of martyrdom in posters of the *Wars*, and I will further discuss how the play addresses deaths that sunk into oblivion and are not announced in posters, particularly the deaths of those who disappeared during the *Wars*, the so-called 'missing'. They are the antithesis of the celebrity martyr, a term I use to designate very well-known martyrs, in particular the leader martyrs.

First, I will claim that the Blue Group (*Figs. 3.44–3.46*) and the Green Group (*Figs. 3.21–3.23*), which I have previously identified in 3.5, reveal that there are different hierarchical categories of martyrs and that not all deaths are remembered as martyrdoms. Then, I suggest that *Nancy* establishes a theoretical discourse on the construction of the martyr and the missing, and I will explore how these two figures are linked to each other visually and conceptually.

In the second part of this subchapter, I will delve into the construction of celebrity martyrs and focus on the examples of Bachir (*Fig. 3.52*) and Hariri (*Fig. 3.53*), who appear in *Nancy*. I will argue that the play reflects the fact that the images of

414 Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 33.

415 Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 123.