

*Inhabitants* analyses the fabrication and contextualisation of martyr posters, but also discusses how images have the capacity to manipulate emotions. While this non-academic lecture addresses a broader spectrum of martyrs in Lebanon than *Three Posters* does—namely, Shia, Sunni, and secular Communists who died through different modes, such as martyrdom operations, car bombs, and combat—the notion of Christian martyrdom is absent.

*Nancy*, unlike *Three Posters* and *Inhabitants*, deals with various kinds of martyrs and their images, not only with the dead from the Communist Party and the Muslim parties. Therefore, *Nancy*, as we will see, reveals that each group operated with similar visual strategies and had a comparable conception of its shuhada. Throughout my discussion of *Nancy*, I will make references to *Three Posters* and *Inhabitants*, since I understand the appropriations of the image of the martyr as a common thread uniting these three pieces.

### 3.5 Four Sectarian Martyrs on Their Way to Murr Tower: The Protagonists, and the Historical Background of *Nancy*

I will now introduce the stories and not all but a substantial amount of the visuals of the four actors of *Nancy* and show that, although they belong to different parties, their lives and deaths are similar. Furthermore, I will locate the stories of the actors in the historical background of the conflicts in Lebanon between 1973 and 2007, which is the time frame in which the play is set. I will also link the posters of *Nancy* to their underlying images, which, in most cases, are posters issued by the sectarian groups during the Wars.

Many of the stories the protagonists are telling could have happened as narrated and they are sometimes inspired by actual occurrences or by literary works. For example, an anecdote relayed by Ziad, who tells of his death by freezing in the mountains (15), is modelled after an episode in Elias Khoury's novel *White Masks* (1981).<sup>218</sup>

In the script, the actors are referred to by their first names only, which evokes a feeling of intimacy, and I will also use their first names in the discussion. As mentioned above, Rabih, Hatem, Ziad, and Lina usually do not talk to each other but speak in monologues. For this reason, I will re-trace the story of each actor separately until the end, when all four protagonists meet at Murr Tower.

*All of the images that appear in this section are taken from Rabih Mroué's 2007 play How Nancy Wished That Everything Was an April Fool's Joke. It was written by Rabih Mroué and Fadi Toufiq and directed by Rabih Mroué. The posters were designed by Samar Maakaroun and are based on Zeina Maasri's research and on her book Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War. The images are courtesy of Rabih Mroué.*

218 Elias Khoury, *White Masks* (Quercus: Maclehose Press, 2010 [1981]), 175–77.

### 3.5.1 Rabih: From Christian Parties to Murr Tower

At the beginning of the play, Rabih introduces himself by saying 'I'm Rabih Mroué, resident of Jbeil' (13). This statement is accompanied, on the screen above him, by an ID photograph showing his face (Fig. 3.5). He then tells the audience that in 1973 he joined a training camp with the right-wing Christian National Liberal Party, also known as Ahrar.<sup>219</sup> At this point the visual on the screen changes (Fig. 3.6), so that the ID photograph shown in *Figure 3.5* is supplemented by the Ahrar logo (a golden cedar on a red-white circle), Rabih's name in white letters, and the name of the party in black letters.



Fig. 3.5: Nancy, Rabih.



Fig. 3.6: Nancy, Rabih, 'Ahrar'.

From 1975 until 1977, Rabih remained a member of Ahrar. During these years, he died three times, once in a clash with a rival militia and twice in the infamous 'Battle of the Hotels', which took place between 1975 and 1976 in the Hotel District of Downtown Beirut. Allied Christian militias fought against Muslim and secular leftist paramilitaries. The main zones of battle were hotels, such as the Holiday Inn, and other high-rise buildings, such as Murr Tower, which the warring factions had seized and used as bastions. This battle was important because it led to the

<sup>219</sup> The training camps of which Rabih speaks were organised in Mount Lebanon as early as 1973; see Jabre, *Lebanese Resistance Posters*, 25.

establishment of the Green Line, which divided mostly Christian East Beirut and mostly Muslim West Beirut and would remain unchanged until 1990.<sup>220</sup>

The three deaths of Rabih that were just mentioned are accompanied by martyr posters, all of which include a photograph of the actor, a slogan labelling him a shahid, his date of death, the Ahrar logo, and a building. The first of these posters is also the first martyr poster that appears in *Nancy* (Fig. 3.7). It shows Murr Tower in its urban surroundings. The two following posters (Figs. 3.8–3.9) depict Rabih in front of the Holiday Inn. The latter two images are almost identical, but one of them (Fig. 3.9) additionally includes a photograph of the Spanish singer Julio Iglesias above the building. This is a reference to the text, in which Rabih explains that he oversaw the security of Iglesias, who came to Lebanon for a concert in 1977, when the Wars were thought to be over and thus celebrities and pop stars visited and performed there.

In 1978, Tony Frangieh, the commander of the mostly Maronite, pro-Syrian Marada brigade, was assassinated by the Kataeb—also known as the Phalange, a right-wing Maronite Christian party then allied with Israel—in the so-called ‘Ehden-massacre’ along with his wife, his young daughter, and dozens of villagers. Some accounts suspect that Bachir, the son of Kataeb founder Pierre Gemayel, was the initiator of this bloodbath. The event is considered to be part of Bachir’s

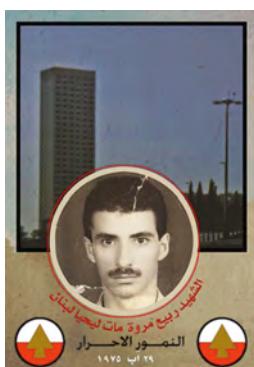


Fig. 3.7: *Nancy*, Rabih and the Beirut Skyline, ‘Martyr Rabih Mroué. He Died for Lebanon to Live. Tigers. Ahrar Party. 29 August 1975’.



Fig. 3.8: *Nancy*, Rabih and the Holiday Inn, ‘The Martyr Hero Rabih Mroué. 21 March 1976. Ahrar’.



Fig. 3.9: *Nancy*, Rabih, the Holiday Inn, and Julio Iglesias. ‘The Martyr Hero Rabih Mroué. 21 March 1976. Ahrar’.

220 For details of the Battle of the Hotels, see Paul Jureidini, R.D. McLaurin, and James M. Price, *Military Operations in Selected Lebanese Built-Up Areas, 1975–1978: Technical Memorandum* (Aberdeen: U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory, 1979); Traboulsi, *History*, 192–98; Gregory Buchakjian, ‘Habitats Abandonnés de Beyrouth: Guerres et Mutations de l’Espace Urbain 1860–2015’ (PhD diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2016), 51–59.



Fig. 3.10: Nancy, Rabih with a Halo of Doves, 'Died for Truth. Martyr Rabih Mroué'.

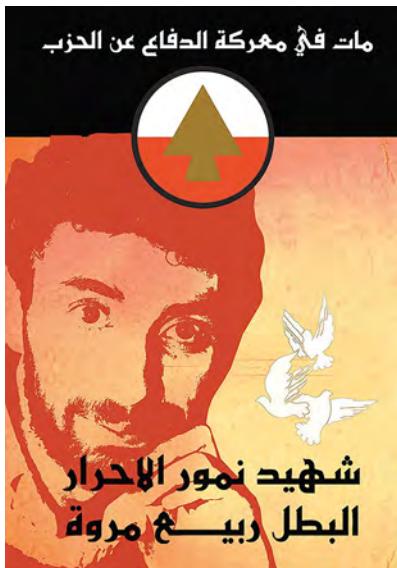


Fig. 3.11: Nancy, Rabih with Doves, 'Died in Battle to Defend the Party. The Martyr of the Ahrar Tigers. The Hero Rabih Mroué'.

efforts to unite all Lebanese Christians under his leadership—even if this meant resorting to violence.<sup>221</sup> Bachir was also the leader of the Lebanese Forces (LF), the military wing of the Kataeb. After the murder of the Frangieh family, members of Marada sought vengeance and killed Rabih at a checkpoint, since they mistakenly identified him as a Phalangist. One year later, the Phalange attacked Ahrar to force them under Bachir's command.<sup>222</sup> Disillusioned, Rabih decided to leave the *Wars* and hence also Ahrar. He informed his party supervisor of his decision, but the supervisor became upset and shot Rabih dead. Despite the fact that neither of these killings happened in combat—one was the result of a misunderstanding and the other of a decision to turn away from violence—Rabih is remembered as a martyr in a poster in both cases (Figs. 3.10–3.11). These posters show Rabih's face, flying birds, and the Ahrar logo against an orange background.

Rabih's story continues:

For two days afterwards I lay there, left to my dead devices, thinking about it all, mulling it over, analysing... Well, well... Finally, I came to the conclusion that it was indeed in the interest of the Christians to unite as one voice, one rifle under a strong, solid leadership such as that of Bachir Gemayel and his Lebanese Forces. (19)

<sup>221</sup> For the Ehden massacre, see Traboulsi, *History*, 209.

<sup>222</sup> For details of the attack, see *ibid.* 209–10.



Fig. 3.12: Nancy, 'Died for an Infinite Lebanon. Martyr Rabih Mroué'.

Putting his thoughts into action, Rabih joined the LF in 1980, and he later died as a martyr for his new militia while finishing off the last Ahrar bastion, thereby terminating the influence of Ahrar as a political player. At this point, his martyr poster (Fig. 3.12) no longer bears a golden cedar; instead, there is a filigree green cedar in a red circle, which is the logo of the LF that appears above and below Rabih's body.

In 1982, Bachir Gemayel, at that time president-elect, was assassinated by a bomb that was placed in the Phalange's party premises and detonated there. The Phalange, with the assistance of the Israeli Army, took revenge by entering the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in West Beirut and slaughtering thousands of Palestinian

civilians. Rabih also participated in the massacre. It is often suspected that Elie Hobeika, a high-ranking militiaman of the LF, whose security division Rabih was part of, played a vital role in the execution of the carnage.<sup>223</sup>

One year later, the Israeli Army withdrew from parts of Mount Lebanon, which they had occupied, leaving a power vacuum. Both the Phalange and the then pro-Syrian Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) attempted to gain control of this region, culminating in the infamous 'War of the Mountain'. In the course of this conflict, Rabih died in an ambush by the PSP, who finally won the battle.<sup>224</sup> As a consequence of this victory, the PSP, according to Rabih's speech, was trying to reinvent Lebanon. Among other things, they changed the flag and anthem, and what outraged Rabih most was that they aimed to rewrite the history books. He says, 'Here I flip for real—anything but history! It made my blood boil. I get up straightaway and drive out there in my car in defence of history' (24). On his way, he died in a car accident and is consequently remembered as 'Martyr of History'.

In 1985 and 1986, the Phalange suffered internal struggles. First, Bachir's brother Amin, who had become his successor, was overthrown by Hobeika and Samir Geagea. This controversy finally led to a partition of the party into the LF, led by

<sup>223</sup> For details of Bachir's assassination and the Sabra and Shatila massacre, see *ibid.*, 218.

<sup>224</sup> For the War of the Mountain, see *ibid.*, 224.

Hobeika and Geagea, and the Kataeb, led by Gemayel. Rabih sided with the LF. Soon after, Geagea and Hobeika could not agree on whether to sign a Syrian-brokered peace treaty to end the Wars. While Geagea objected to this, Hobeika favoured the acceptance of the treaty and even went to Damascus to sign it. Consequently, the two men split, and Geagea remained in control of East Beirut while Hobeika relocated to Zahlé, a mainly Christian town in the Bekaa valley.<sup>225</sup>

Rabih stayed loyal to Hobeika, was killed by the Geagea faction of the LF in 1986, and was presented as a martyr in a poster issued by the LF (Fig. 3.13). The image shows Rabih wearing sunglasses with a cross-shaped pendant dangling from his necklace. The design of the poster, a white background with a red stripe in the lower part, corresponds to a poster issued for him earlier in the play (Fig. 3.12). After a week, Rabih came back to life and tried to flee from Geagea's sphere of influence, but he was caught by Geagea's men, as the accompanying press clipping that appears on the screen above his head (Fig. 3.14) shows. Finally, he was killed a second time by Geagea's men.



Fig. 3.13: *Nancy, 'Died for an Infinite Lebanon. Martyr Rabih Mroué'*.



Fig. 3.14: *Nancy*, Press Clipping That Mentions Rabih.

I dedicated myself to working full-time in the security division, where I was involved in planning various... erm... 'security ops', for lack of a better term... The goal was to shake up the sense of security and stability in those areas of East Beirut that fell under the Lebanese Forces' command. (29)

225 For the split, see *ibid.*, 226–27.

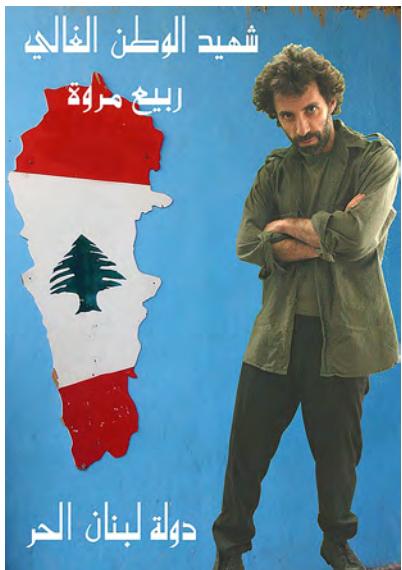


Fig. 3.15: Nancy, 'Martyr of the Dear Homeland Rabih Mroué. Free Lebanon State'.

Two years later, in 1988, the commander of the Lebanese Army, Michel Aoun, was appointed as interim prime minister of Lebanon. He attempted to end the presence of the LF in East Beirut by sending the Lebanese Army to Ashrafieh, a predominantly Christian quarter in East Beirut, to wage the 'War of Liberation', which Rabih participated in on Aoun's side. The battle finally ended in October 1990, when the Syrian Army stormed the presidential palace and Aoun was forced into exile.<sup>226</sup> Consequently, the Syrian Army also took over East Beirut, and Rabih moved to the South of the country, where he joined the predominantly Christian South Lebanon Army (SLA), a militia that was commanded by Antoine Lahad and backed by Israel.

Eight years later, Rabih was assassinated by Hezbollah, also known as the Party of God. The Shiite group emerged in 1982 and has close ties to the Islamic Republic of Iran. This time, Rabih's martyr poster (Fig. 3.15) shows him standing cross-armed next to a map of Lebanon. In 2000, the Israeli Army withdrew from the South. Rabih continued to live in Lebanon and, because he had been a militiaman during the Wars, he was frequently visited by the security forces when bombings and assassinations occurred.

On 25 January 2007, Rabih heard on television about the shooting at the Arab University in Beirut. Four students were killed in this incident, which was caused by sectarian strife between Shia and Sunni groups. It resulted in several days of violence, which were the most severe sectarian scuffles that took place after the nominal ending of the Wars and before the release of *Nancy*.<sup>227</sup>

Fears of an open civil war erupted, and this fighting triggered the creation of the play, as Toufiq told me:

<sup>226</sup> For the War of Liberation, see *ibid.*, 242–43.

<sup>227</sup> 'Four Killed in Beirut University Clash', *The Guardian*, 25 January 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/jan/25/internationaleducationnews.highereducation>.

But for us, it was [...] to see if there was still the possibility of civil war. This Arab University fighting showed us we still carry this potentiality [...]. The Beirut Arab University shooting was the first one after the official ending of the civil war. This kind of fighting, sniping, two kinds of religious parties doing street fighting [...]. For me, [...] it was this event that triggered the revisiting of the civil war.<sup>228</sup>

After having heard about the Beirut Arab University shooting, Rabih went to Murr Tower because, as he explains, 'given my former experience in combat, I know that the battle for Beirut is as good as won by whoever's the first to control the Tower' (34). This detour to Murr Tower is accompanied by an image of Beirut's skyline (Fig. 3.16).

Rabih's story is that of a fighter martyr who repeatedly died in battle. Although he was frequently killed by the parties to which he belonged, these parties still remembered him as a martyr in visuals. Due to his being murdered by his fellow combatants, he left his militia more than once, only to fight against them in the next battle and be killed by his former affiliates. Therefore, Rabih embodies not only the fighter but also the victim of his own party.



Fig. 3.16: *Nancy*, Beirut Skyline 1.

### 3.5.2 Hatem: From Sunni Parties to Murr Tower

The second fighter figure is Hatem. Like Rabih, he introduces himself at the beginning of *Nancy*: 'My name is Hatem Imam; resident of Tariq el Jdideh, Beirut; originally from Tripoli' (13). These words are accompanied by his ID photograph (Fig. 3.17). Next, he says, 'When the war first broke out, I was with the Morabitoun' (14). The same photograph still appears on the screen, but it is now sectarianised, with the octagonal Morabitoun logo below and the name of the party written above Hatem's head (Fig. 3.18). The Morabitoun, which translates as steadfast in English, was the military wing of the Sunni, pan-Arabist Independent Nasserist Movement, which was founded in the late 1950s.

<sup>228</sup> Toufiq, Zoom, 6 May 2021. Gade argues that the 2006 War was the initial trigger for writing *Nancy*; see Gade, 'Learning to Live', 343.



Fig. 3.17: Nancy, Hatem.



Fig. 3.18: Nancy, Hatem, 'Morabitoun'.

Hatem was killed when the Morabitoun, together with the Palestinian factions, took over Murr Tower during the Battle of the Hotels in 1975. The poster commemorating his death as a martyr shows him in front of that tower (Fig. 3.19). A few months later, in 1976, Hatem was killed again during the Battle of the Hotels, but this time in the Holiday Inn by, he thinks, a Phalangist; his killer was actually Rabih, who was then still a militiaman of Ahrar. The poster commemorating Hatem's martyrdom (Fig. 3.20) shows the Holiday Inn and three photographs of the actor's face.

In 1982, Hatem went to the South to assist his Palestinian allies in a battle and was killed. The poster accompanying this martyrdom has Hatem wearing sunglasses, with his photograph surrounded by a green background (Fig. 3.21). The Morabitoun logo is also visible. After his death, the Palestinian Fatah organised a large funeral for Hatem, which impressed him to such an extent that he subsequently decided to only officially remain a member of the Morabitoun but to actually fight for Fatah. With Fatah, he says, 'I fought in numerous battles and got killed frequently' (21). This speech is accompanied by a replica of the previous image, except that it omits the Morabitoun logo as well as the slogans, and retains only the photograph of Hatem's face, which is still placed on a green background (Fig. 3.22). Due to the logo's absence, it remains unclear which group, Fatah or the Morabitoun, has issued this poster.

After the Israeli invasion of West Beirut in 1982, many of the Palestinian fighters were forced to leave Beirut for Tunis, where they were granted refuge. Hatem, still fighting with Fatah, intended to leave as well. When boarding the ship, however,

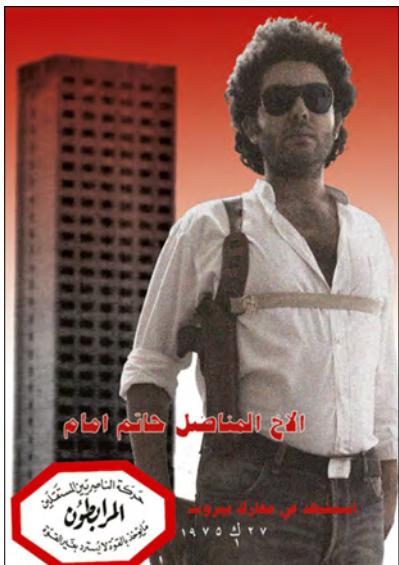


Fig. 3.19: Nancy, Hatem and Murr Tower, 'The Militant Brother Hatem Imam: Martyred in the Beirut Fighting. 27 December 1975'.

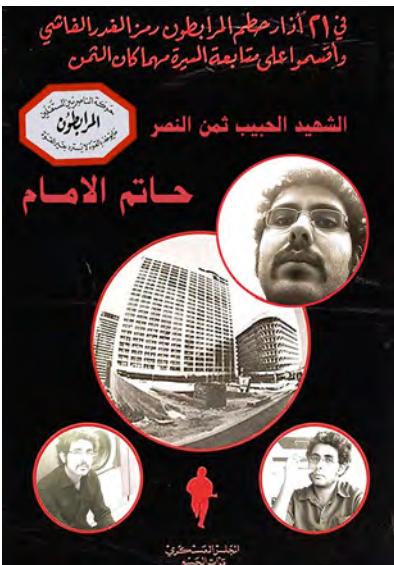


Fig. 3.20: Nancy, Hatem and the Holiday Inn, 'On March 21, the Morabitoun Crush the Symbol of Fascist Treason and Vow to Continue Their Journey at Whatever Cost. The Beloved Martyr Is the Price of Victory: Hatem Imam'.

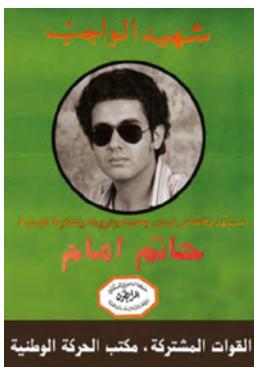


Fig. 3.21: Nancy, 'Martyr of Duty. Died Defending Lebanon, Its Unity, Its Arabism, and the Lebanese Resistance. Hatem Imam. The Joint Forces/The National Movement Office'.

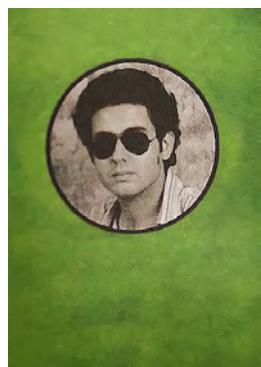


Fig. 3.22: Nancy, Hatem on a Green Background.



Fig. 3.23: Nancy, Green Background Without Hatem.

he was struck by a stray bullet—fired by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)—and later died in Tunis.<sup>229</sup> This death is accompanied by a green monochrome poster (*Fig. 3.23*), which I read as a hint that this death is not perceived as martyrdom.

After the 1983 withdrawal agreement between Lebanon and Israel, which was supposed to establish peace between the two countries and confine Israeli presence in Lebanon to the South,<sup>230</sup> leftist militias attempted to oppose this treaty and Hatem returned to Beirut. He fought again with the Morabitoun, who in 1984—together with their allies—managed to repel the Lebanese Army and Christian militias from West Beirut, which as a result was controlled predominantly by the PSP and by Amal.<sup>231</sup> Amal, which is an Arabic acronym of Lebanese Resistance Regiments, and as an abbreviation translates into English as hope, is a movement founded in 1975 by the Iranian cleric Mussa al-Sadr. It was the first Shia party and militia in Lebanon. Hatem, who was involved in these fights in West Beirut, was wounded and then taken to hospital, where he learned that the Morabitoun's 'allies'—Amal, the LCP, and the PSP—were conspiring against the Morabitoun. Their aim was to eliminate his militia in order to gain more power for themselves:

a wounded man is brought into my room. We exchange a few greetings. In a moment of stupidity, I mention that I am a Morabitun. He pulls out a gun on the spot and shoots me dead. The Red Cross transfers my body to Tripoli. (25)

The poster accompanying this death (*Fig. 3.24*) shows Hatem wearing a red headband in front of a background of red and black stripes. Nine drops of blood are visible in the lower part, while the Morabitoun logo is located at the centre, from which the stripes radiate.

In the same year, the Morabitoun dissolved and Hatem joined the Sunni, anti-Syrian Islamic Unification Movement (IUM) in the Northern city of Tripoli, and he died there in combat. His death is accompanied by a poster (*Fig. 3.25*) in which he is depicted with a takke, a form of Sunni headgear that is worn during prayer, in front of a background that shows the Dome of the Rock, a red flower, birds, and the moon. The slogans mention that the IUM has issued the poster.

In 1987, Hatem decided to go on the Hajj, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. There, he met someone who convinced him to move to Afghanistan in order to join the Islamic mujahedeen in their fight against Soviet occupation.

<sup>229</sup> For historical events surrounding the PLO's departure from Beirut, see Traboulsi, *History*, 215.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 224–25.

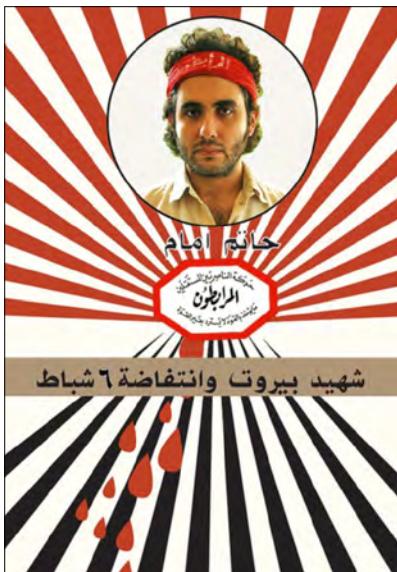


Fig. 3.24: *Nancy*, 'Hatem Imam. Martyr of Beirut and the February 6 Insurgency'.

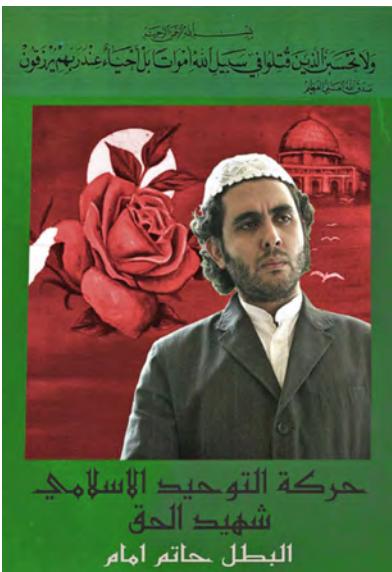


Fig. 3.25: Nancy, 'In the Name of God the All-Merciful. And Do Not Consider as Dead Those Who Have Died for God, for They Are Truly Alive. Islamic Unification Movement. Martyr of Truth: The Hero Hatem Imam'.

Two years later, Hatem was killed when the Soviet Union left Afghanistan and civil war broke out. This death is commemorated with a pink poster (*Fig. 3.26*) that shows a stylised flower with a drop of blood in its centre. Six of the flower's petals are black, the seventh shows Hatem's face.

Not tired of international adventures, Hatem intended to continue his global fight for Islam in Bosnia.

Now, due to my ignorance of the urban fabric of Bosnian streets, I was killed in record speed along with my unit—whereupon the brothers politely asked me to leave the country as soon as possible for the safety of their fighters. (31)

This death is accompanied by the same image as that shown in *Figure 3.26*, but now all the petals are filled with photographs of martyrs (*Fig. 3.27*).<sup>232</sup>

232 The names of all martyrs are indicated as Hatem Imam. Mroué said the multiple images of Hatem are because he died many times; thus, several deaths are compressed into one poster. Mroué Zoom, 18 May 2021.

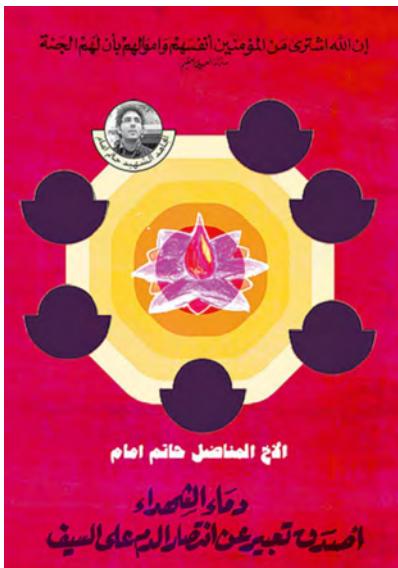


Fig. 3.26: Nancy, 'The Militant Brother Hatem Imam. The Blood of the Martyrs Is the Truest Expression of the Victory of Blood Over the Sword'.

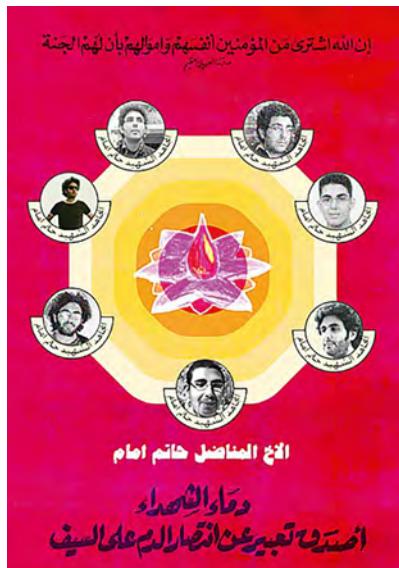


Fig. 3.27: Nancy, Hatem and Other Martyrs, 'The Militant Brother Hatem Imam. The Blood of the Martyrs Is the Truest Expression of the Victory of Blood Over the Sword'.



Fig. 3.28: Nancy, Beirut Skyline 2.

Hatem returned to Tripoli, where he joined a Salafist group and established a religious training camp. The so-called 'Dinnieh group' tried to build a miniature Islamic State in Northern Lebanon and had even started to seize villages before the Lebanese Army dissolved the group in 1999 and killed several of its members, among them Hatem. After this incident, Hatem abandoned his life as a fighter and started selling Arabic sweets in Beirut.

In 2005, the killing of Hariri encouraged Hatem to join the protests of the so-called 'Cedar Revolution'. He sided with the Sunni-led March 14 camp, a coalition of Sunni groups, Christian groups, and the PSP that called the

Syrian Army to end its tutelage of Lebanon, which it indeed did in 2005.<sup>233</sup> Finally, when Hatem heard about the Beirut Arab University shooting in 2007, he, like Rabih, headed to Murr Tower. A view of Beirut's cityscape then becomes visible behind him (Fig. 3.28).

Like Rabih, Hatem is a fighter martyr who died in various battles. He was usually forced to change his militia because it dissolved, was expelled from the country, or was dispelled by the army. Hatem's story is remarkable due to his international endeavours, which also point to the larger geopolitical context of the Wars.

### 3.5.3 Ziad: From Communist and Shia Parties to Murr Tower

Like Rabih and Hatem, Ziad, the third fighter, introduces himself while accompanied by an ID photograph (Fig. 3.29). He says: 'Ziad Antar; from the South; from Kfar Kila, Marjeyoun District' (13). The next image (Fig. 3.30) shows the same photograph politicised with a hammer and a sickle that refer to the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), a non-confessional group of intellectuals and workers. Ziad joined the fighting in 1976 after moving from the South to Beirut, where he started working as a security guard but was still not an official member of the LCP. He was injured



Fig. 3.29: Nancy, Ziad.



Fig. 3.30: Nancy, Ziad, 'LCP'.

<sup>233</sup> For the context of Hariri's killing and the Syrian withdrawal, see Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 158–63; Khatib, *Image Politics*, 16–19.



Fig. 3.31: Nancy, Ziad, LCP Application Form, 'Name: Ziad Antar. Born: Kfar Kila. Department: South'.



Fig. 3.32: Nancy, Ziad and the Sannine Mountains, 'The Hero of Sannine. Ziad Antar. Member of the Political Office of the Communist Party'.

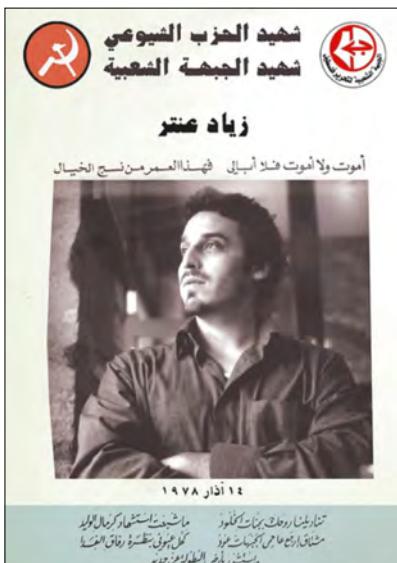


Fig. 3.33: Nancy, 'Martyr of the LCP. Martyr of the PFLP. Ziad Antar. To Die or Not to Die, What Care I. For This Life Is but a Figment of the Imagination...''



Fig. 3.34: Nancy, 'PFLP. The Land Is Ours. Ziad Antar. 9 November 1976. He Was Martyred on the Southern Soil While Confronting Israeli Agents'.

by a shell in a battle in the Sannine mountain range, where he froze to death. After his death, the LCP asked him to fill in an official application for the party, as this would 'allow them to issue a black-and-white poster of me in the Party's name' (15). This is visualised by a fragment of an application form (*Fig. 3.31*). In the upper left-hand corner, a hammer and a sickle, referring to the LCP, are visible. Right next to this, a photograph of Ziad, wearing sunglasses, is pinned to the paper, and further personal information is indicated.

His martyr poster, issued by the LCP (*Fig. 3.32*), proves that Ziad's post-mortem application was successful. He even received a coloured poster. After being buried in the South, he got a call from the LCP to join the leftist resistance against the Israeli occupation there. Subsequently, Ziad died during a joint operation of the LCP and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) against the Israeli Army in 1976. The poster issued on this occasion (*Fig. 3.33*) depicts him in combat gear with crossed hands.

Two years later, Ziad, who was still lying dead on the battlefield, returned to life because of powerful Israeli shelling. He immediately continued fighting and was killed again by the Israeli Army, which was about to establish a permanent presence in the South. This martyrdom is commemorated with a poster that shows Ziad's face in front of red stripes, apparently symbolising the gushing of blood, and a hand holding a flare or torch with orange and red flames (*Fig. 3.34*). The PFLP took Ziad's body with them when they retreated.

I spent a whole month in Saida, lying down in the Hammoud Hospital morgue with nothing to do. [...] I was bored to death. I eventually left and went to look up my family, who had been displaced from our village to Beirut's southern suburb of Dahieh. (18)

When he arrived there, Ziad continued to be an energetic member of the LCP. Amal was also active in his neighbourhood, and violent scuffles between the two groups often emerged.

During one of these battles, the LCP destroyed a minaret from which Amal was firing. From Ziad's perspective, using and destroying religious buildings during fighting was inexcusable: 'Marx never said anything about bombing mosques or churches!' (20). He therefore left the LCP, which consequently ignored him. In an apparent act of defiance, Ziad joined the Amal Movement and, in 1982, fought with them against the LCP. Like Rabih and Hatem, Ziad died several times in 1982, mostly in combat against his former affiliates, the Palestinians and the LCP.

From one of these deaths, Ziad returned to life when the Israeli invasion of 1982 was in full swing. Without telling anyone, he travelled from the South to Beirut, as he wanted to join the fighting there against the Israeli Army. Shortly after his arrival, he was directly hit by a missile, and his body was torn to pieces. Therefore,

his identity remained unknown and his narration of this anecdote is not accompanied by a martyr poster: due to the absence of a body, and because nobody knew about his operation, no militia could claim his martyrdom as 'theirs'. After coming back to life, Ziad took part in a joint effort of different leftist and Muslim forces to expel the Lebanese Army and the Israeli Army from West Beirut. Afterwards, as we already know from Hatem's story, clashes kicked off between the sectarian groups that drove them out. The Morabitoun encircled the house of Nabih Berri, then and now the leader of the Amal Movement, and Ziad was involved in the operation to transport Berri to safety. During this activity, Ziad was hit by a sniper bullet fired from a minaret. This confused him again: 'I don't understand how they can bring themselves to use places of worship for such purposes, and with such nonchalance' (25). Amal commemorated his death via a poster that shows Ziad's face, white, green, and red radiating stripes, nine drops of blood, and the group's logo (Fig. 3.35). Berri was evacuated one day after Ziad's death, and Amal, the LCP, and the PSP then jointly fought and extinguished the Morabitoun.

After this experience, Ziad decided that he no longer wanted to kill anyone from a Lebanese party and thus he went to the South to fight only the Israeli Army. There, he participated in a number of operations in and around Saida, and then heard about a mysterious organisation that had executed several attacks against



Fig. 3.35: Nancy, 'Ziad Antar: The Martyr of Beirut and the February 6 Insurgency'.



Fig. 3.36: Nancy, 'In the Name of God the All-Merciful. And Do Not Consider as Dead Those Who Have Died for God, for They Are Truly Alive. Martyr of the South. Ziad Antar'.

Israeli, US, and French soldiers. Not knowing it was Hezbollah, Ziad was highly impressed by their heroism and sacrifices and wanted to make his contribution. In an individually planned operation, he decided to blow himself up at an Israeli checkpoint. But, as he narrates:

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. (26–27)

The death was counted as an Amal martyrdom. This is proved by the accompanying poster (Fig. 3.36), which includes the Amal logo on the lower left corner.

Later, in 1985, when Ziad's body was released by the Israeli Army, Amal and Hezbollah argued over its ownership: 'His body belongs to us!—No way, it belongs to us and us only!' (27). In the end, this fight was won by Amal. After he came back to life, in 1987, Ziad again declined to take part in any battle with any other Lebanese militia and was criticised by his commanders for doing so.

Soon after, he was shot by a fellow militiaman. This was apparently by accident, but Ziad doubted how accidental his death really was: 'To be honest, I don't know to what extent it was really by mistake. For starters, all of these battles were taking

place by mistake. Either way, I get a bullet in the gut and die on the spot' (29).

After being killed by his own group, Ziad changed militia and joined Hezbollah. He died three times for his new faction and is now remembered as a martyr on a yellow and green Hezbollah poster (Fig. 3.37). Finally, Ziad returned to the South and joined the resistance against the Israeli occupation, where he was killed several times. From now on, he does not tell the audience about his further deaths for 'security reasons' (31). The poster on the screen indicates that he still died as a martyr for Hezbollah, as it labels him as such; the image shows his face in front of a black mountain and a chain of yellow flowers (Fig. 3.38). Ziad again emphasises that he cannot tell the audience anything else about his further deaths for security reasons.



Fig. 3.37: *Nancy*, 'For Hezbollah Should Be the Victors. 13 August 1988. Shahid al-Muiahd Ziad Antar'.

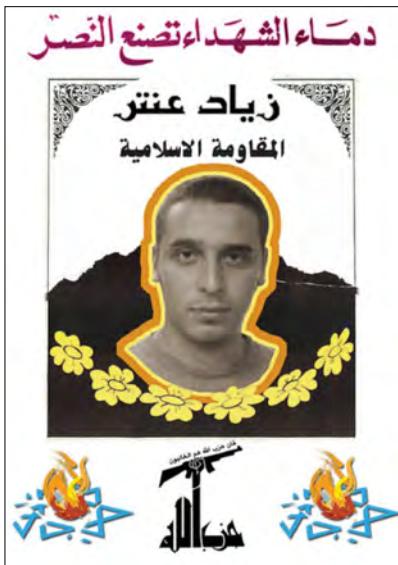


Fig. 3.38: Nancy, 'The Blood of Martyrs Makes the Victory. Ziad Antar. The Islamic Resistance'.

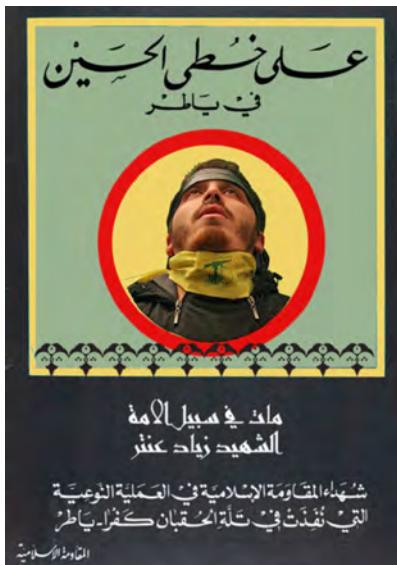


Fig. 3.39: Nancy, 'In the Footsteps of Hossein in Yater. Martyr Ziad Antar. Died for His Motherland. Martyrs of the Islamic Resistance Who Died in the Radical Military Operation on Haqban Hill in Kfar Yater. The Islamic Resistance'.



Fig. 3.40: Nancy, Murr Tower.

This statement is accompanied by a visual (Fig. 3.39) that again labels him as a martyr and shows the actor wearing a green headband and a yellow band with the Hezbollah logo around his neck.

After hearing of Hariri's assassination in 2005, Ziad, like Hatem, went to demonstrations, but on the other political side: the March 8 camp, which was, unlike the March 14 camp, in favour of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. The March 8 movement encompasses Amal and Hezbollah, as well as some smaller players like the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). Finally, when hearing about the shooting at the Arab University, Ziad, like Hatem and Rabih, went to Murr Tower, which appears above his head (Fig. 3.40).

Like Rabih and Hatem, Ziad is a fighter martyr. Unlike the other two actors, he changed his beliefs—from secular to Shia-Islamic—in a manner that lacks loyalty to a single political-religious ideology. While Rabih and Hatem left their militias at some point after the official end of the *Wars* and started an ordinary life, Ziad is still a member, maybe even a fighter, of Hezbollah when he tells his story in *Nancy* in 2007. This could be a reference to the fact that, following the Taif Agreement, all militias were required to surrender their weapons to the Lebanese Army, with the exception of Hezbollah, which argued that they needed them to continue their resistance to Israeli occupation in the South.

### 3.5.4 Lina: From Secular and Christian Parties to Murr Tower

As with the three men, Lina's first visual is an ID photograph (Fig. 3.41) that accompanies her introduction, where she says: 'Lina Saneh; I'm from Mazraa' (13). Next, the same ID photograph appears (Fig. 3.42), but now she is marked as a political being through the addition, at the bottom of the image, of the logo of the SSNP, a secular, pro-Syrian party, founded in 1932, with the aim of restoring Greater Syria.<sup>234</sup> Lina says, 'When the war broke out, I was fighting amongst the ranks of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. I was fighting against the sectarian project and for a secular nation' (15).



Fig. 3.41: *Nancy*, Lina.



Fig. 3.42: *Nancy*, Lina, 'SSNP'.

<sup>234</sup> Greater Syria would come to include Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Kuwait, Cyprus, and parts of Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt; see Solomon, *In Search*, 33.

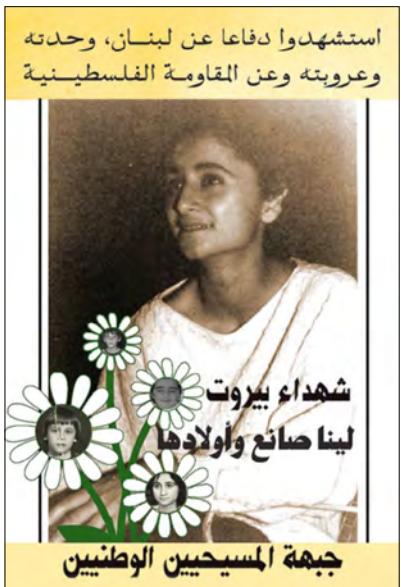


Fig. 3.43: Nancy, Lina and Her Children, 'They Died Defending Lebanon, Its Unity, Its Arabism and the Palestinian Resistance. The Martyrs of Beirut. Lina Saneh and Her Children. The National Christians Front'.

Christians Front but remained active in the Women's Committee of the SSNP. Her death had already provoked sectarian tensions between Christians and Muslims in West Beirut. These tensions were soon heightened because many—mostly Shiite—refugees had come to Beirut due to the Israeli invasion of the South of the country. Also, in the Women's Committee, it was often negatively pointed out that Lina was a Christian. In order to prove her non-sectarian convictions, she decided in 1981 to fight for the SSNP as a militiawoman. Lina was shot, and her party has remembered her death as martyrdom with a poster of her head in front of the SSNP logo (Fig. 3.44).

After the Israeli invasion of West Beirut in 1982, Lina decided to move to the eastern part of town for safety reasons, but regularly crossed the border to continue her SSNP activities in West Beirut. Once, when she and her husband attempted to pass a checkpoint, they were kidnapped by a Palestinian organisation, and because of the mention of Christianity in their identity papers, they were accused of being Israeli spies. The Palestinians shot them and threw their bodies into the sea. That this death was not perceived as martyrdom seems to be indicated by the blue monochrome that appears on the screen above her head (Fig. 3.45). Rather,

Lina is a Christian by religion but a nationalist by ideology. At the beginning of the Wars, when many Christians who were living in West Beirut decided to move to the Christian-dominated East of the city, Lina remained in West Beirut. There, in order to prove that the Wars were not only about the Christian and Muslim divide, and that not all Christians were anti-Palestinian, she reluctantly joined the National Christians Front, a sub-organisation of the SSNP for Christian party members. Lina became a commander and, in 1977, she was massacred with her family at home because she was criticising other parties in her neighbourhood. The accompanying poster (Fig. 3.43) shows Lina, who is joined on the lower left of the poster by images of her children, each one of whom appears in the centre of one of four flowers. After her murder, Lina abandoned the National

Lina became one of the thousands of people who are missing—that is, who have disappeared without trace. Three months later, Lina's body was found in the sea, and she went home.

In 1984, the Lebanese Army tried taking over West Beirut but was repelled by an alliance between Amal, the PSP, the LCP, the Morabitoun, and the SSNP. As already mentioned in Hatem's and Ziad's stories, discrepancies between these allied groups arose, and Lina, who tried to solve the matter, was killed in an ambush by Amal. This death is accompanied by a poster that is entirely blue except for a circle, in the lower half, that includes the SSNP logo and Lina's head (Fig. 3.46).

Because of this killing, Lina abandoned all her political activities and began work in the culture section of a local newspaper in East Beirut. She continued until she was beaten to death on her way home. Her killer, who was affiliated with the LF, wanted to take revenge for the murder of a Christian that had occurred in West Beirut earlier that day. This means Lina, as a Christian, served as vengeance for a Christian victim because she had voluntarily lived in West Beirut, the predominantly Muslim part of the city, for quite a long time before having moved to Christian East Beirut.<sup>235</sup> Her martyrdom is commemorated with a black-and-white poster (Fig. 3.47) that includes a photograph of her face and a black cross slightly above her forehead. Lina states:



Fig. 3.44: Nancy, 'The Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Nationalist Army. First Division. The Martyr Heroine Lina Saneh (aka Um Tarek). Though Our Bodies May Fall, Our Spirit Shall Maintain Its Reality Over This Existence'.

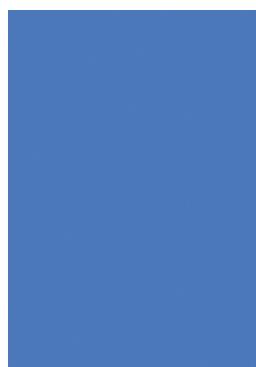


Fig. 3.45: Nancy, Blue Background Without Lina.



Fig. 3.46: Nancy, Lina on a Blue Background.

235 A similar incident is narrated in Etel Adnan's novel *Sitt Marie Rose* (1982). A Shia man, who believed that his brother was killed by Phalangists, was looking to kill a Christian in order to avenge his brother.



Fig. 3.47: Nancy, 'A Token of Love and Loyalty. Our Martyr Heroine Lina Saneh. Christian Nationals, Family and Friends of Mazraa Invite You to Pray for Her Pure Soul on Sunday March 12, 1984, at 10 am, St. Georges Church, Ashrafieh'.

background with the photograph and a red strip below—corresponds to posters of Rabih when he died for the LF (Figs. 3.12-3.13).

This time, however, Lina did not return to life but remained a corpse. As Hobeika was responsible for her death, she sided with Geagea, and the LF commissioned her in her dead state to spy on Hobeika in Zahlé. There, Lina was uncovered by another corpse and liquidated by Hobeika's men.<sup>236</sup> In the storyline of *Nancy*, this means the corpse was murdered again by the LF and was again remembered by the LF as a martyr. This martyrdom is indicated by a poster (Fig. 3.49) that labels Lina, who is sitting behind an office desk and talking on the telephone, as a shahida twice. The LF also organised a tribute ceremony for her, as she tells the audience: 'Over 300 martyrs were invited, myself among them. During the ceremony, Doctor Samir Geagea gave a speech and handed each of us a shield of honour in recognition for our sacrifices' (30).

Following this event, Lina became the financial commander of the LF and never died again. After East Beirut was overtaken by the Syrian Army in 1990, and follow-

After I was beaten to death by that thoughtless youth from the Lebanese Forces, I conducted a self-assessment and came to the conclusion that circumstances no longer called for a noble stance, that if I wanted to protect myself, my family and my children, I had to give up my neutral position. So, in order to cover my back, I joined the Lebanese Forces. (27)

Lina accompanied Hobeika on a visit to Syria, but upon her return she, like Rabih, became a victim of the dispute within the party, as Hobeika accused her of spying for Geagea and ordered that she be killed. After the execution of this order, Lina, like Rabih, was commemorated as a martyr by the LF, who were in fact responsible for her death. A black-and-white photograph shows her sitting on a jeep (Fig. 3.48). The overall design of the poster—namely, a white

<sup>236</sup> Hobeika was indeed ousted by Geagea and Amin Gemayel in 1986. See Traboulsi, *History*, 226–27.

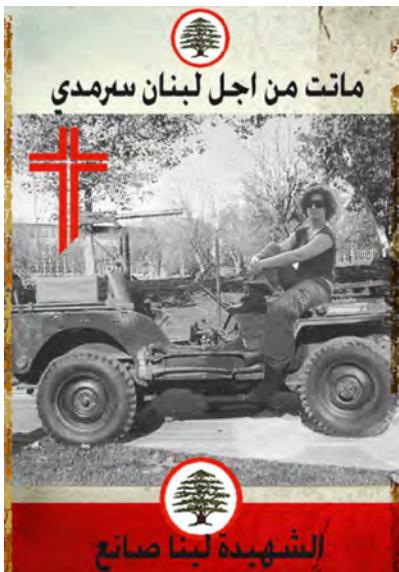


Fig. 3.48: *Nancy*, Lina on a Jeep, 'Died for an Infinite Lebanon. Martyr Lina Saneh'.



Fig. 3.49: *Nancy*, Lina on the Phone, 'Martyr of Truth. Martyr of the Lebanese Forces. Lina Saneh'.

ing the implementation of the Taif Agreement, the LF, like all other militias except for Hezbollah, were in theory obliged to hand in their weapons to the state.<sup>237</sup> Lina tells the audience about her activities during the official end of the *Wars* in 1990:

As for us Forces, we turned in only a small portion of our arms and managed to sell the rest to a client in Yugoslavia. Over there, the war was only just beginning... I handled the financial end of the transaction. We shipped the arms from the Jounieh port and, once in Yugoslavia, the exchange was carried out with great success. The Serbs passed us the money and we passed them the arms. (31)

This speech is accompanied by a logo of the LF (Fig. 3.50).

Two events impacted Lina's life after the official end of the *Wars*. First, there was a bomb attack in a Maronite church in Jounieh, in 1994, which killed nine worshippers and injured dozens. Fingers were quickly pointed at the LF. Therefore the



Fig. 3.50: *Nancy*, Lebanese Forces.

<sup>237</sup> For more on the Taif Agreement and the Syrian takeover, see *ibid.*, 240–46.



Fig. 3.51: Nancy, Beirut Skyline as Seen from Murr Tower.

University in 2007. She left her family at home and went to Murr Tower. The visual that accompanies this speech is parallel to the one that accompanies the male fighters: the Beirut skyline as seen from Murr Tower (Fig. 3.51).

The character of Lina is remarkable, not only because she is the only woman in the play but also because she is anti-sectarian and joined the LF for opportunistic reasons. Lina died in combat only once. Her other deaths were caused by kidnappings, conspiracies within the party, and beatings on the street.

Lina is also the only protagonist who engages with the speeches of the other actors; specifically, she usually corrects them. For example, when Ziad mentions that the Southern city of Sour was invaded by the Israelis in 1978, Lina interrupts him by saying that the town was actually invaded in 1982 (17–18).

238 Marilyn Raschka, 'Bomb Kills 9, Injures 60 at Church in Lebanon: Terror: Catholic Worshipers Were Taking Communion in Beirut Suburb. No One Claims Responsibility', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 February 1994, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-02-28-mn-28251-story.html>; Ali Jaber, 'Leader of a Major Christian Clan Is Assassinated in Beirut with His Family', *The New York Times*, 22 October 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/22/world/leader-of-a-major-christian-clan-in-beirut-is-assassinated-with-his-family.html>. For Geagea's release, also see Nader Mounmeh, *The Lebanese Forces: Emergence and Transformation of the Christian Resistance* (Lanhan: Hamilton Books, 2019), 201–04 and 318–19. Mounmeh writes from the perspective of an LF-sympathiser. This does not make the history he is telling 'wrong', but it should be noted that there is a certain ideological preference in favour of the LF written between the lines.

239 For his assassination, see Trevor Mostyn, 'Obituary Elie Hobeika', *The Guardian*, 25 January 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jan/25/israelandthepalestinians.lebanon>.

militia, which had now turned into a party, was forced to dissolve. Geagea was then arrested and sentenced for the commission of the bombing as well as the killing of the Ahrar leader, Dany Chamoun, who, along with his family, was massacred in his home in 1990. After the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, Geagea was released, and today he is the head of the LF and an important player in Lebanon's political landscape.<sup>238</sup>

The second incident Lina recounts is her arrest after the assassination of Hobeika in 2002,<sup>239</sup> because it was thought that she wanted to take revenge against him for ordering her killing twice. Finally, Lina tells the audience that she was watching TV when she learned of the shooting at the Arab

When Rabih tells the audience of the War of the Mountain between Christian and Druze militias, including abductions and massacres, Lina simply mentions the date 1860, establishing a historical link to the nineteenth century, when violence also erupted between Druze and Christians in the Shuf mountains (24).

### 3.5.5 All Sectarian Martyrs Are Heading to Murr Tower

Rabih, Hatem, Ziad, and Lina are portrayed as sectarian martyrs who die multiple times. Although they come from different backgrounds and go through different ideological phases during the play, they have comparable experiences and are presented by their parties as martyrs in similar ways. Notably, none of the actors claims to be part of the Druze PSP. When I asked Mroué why the PSP was absent, he said that he had not realised this. As the stories of the four protagonists are based on the stories of real people he and Toufiq actually knew, he suspected that none were members of the PSP.<sup>240</sup> Toufiq, on the other hand, said that because *Nancy* is not a representation of history and should not be understood as a history book but as an artistic reflection of the *Wars*, it was not important to include all warring factions.<sup>241</sup>

In contrast to the PSP, the LF are omnipresent, as not only one but two actors, Lina and Rabih, join the party at certain points. Mroué explained this as follows:

During the civil war, many parties in the West part of Beirut and Lebanon tried to live together, sometimes allying with each other and sometimes fighting. In the East, however, one political party quickly took over and controlled everything. It was the Lebanese Forces under the command of Bachir Gemayel, who was assassinated in 1982. Since then [Bachir's assassination], three to four political parties have emerged on the political scene, fighting among themselves. During Bachir's period, the Eastern part of the country was well-organised and had the structure of a fascist state. The Lebanese Forces enforced military service for all young males living there, imposed taxes on the inhabitants, and suppressed dissenting voices. They were very well organised. In contrast, the Western part was not controlled by one party or leader, resulting in total continuous fighting and chaos.<sup>242</sup>

The Christian actors who lived in East Beirut were simply more likely to join the Phalange or, after the split of the party in 1985, the LF or the Kataeb or any of the few small Christian parties, whereas the actors who lived in West Beirut had a greater variety of choices of which party to join.

<sup>240</sup> Mroué, Zoom, 18 May 2021.

<sup>241</sup> Toufiq, Zoom, 6 May 2021.

<sup>242</sup> Mroué, Zoom, 18 May 2021.



Fig. 3.52: *Nancy*, Bachir, 2007, Tokyo International Arts Festival, Tokyo, Photograph Kohei Matsushima.

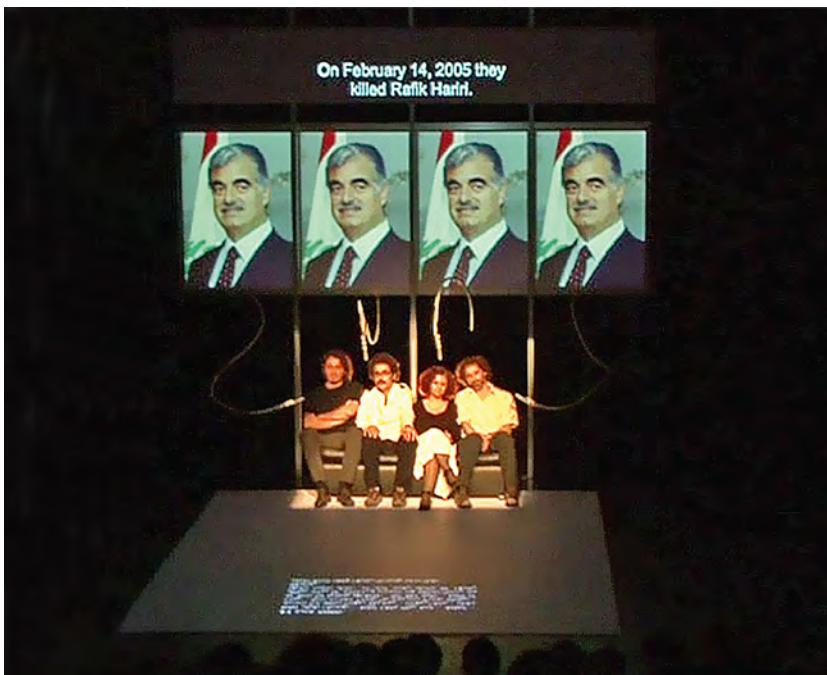


Fig. 3.53: *Nancy*, Hariri, 2007, Masrah al-Madina, Beirut, Still from Video from Ashkal Alwan's Audiovisual Archive.

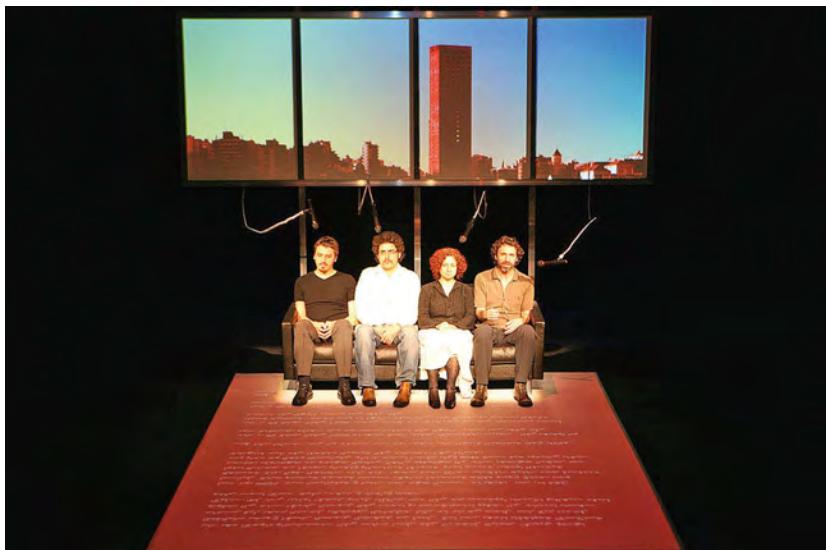


Fig. 3.54: *Nancy, Murr Tower, 2007*, Tokyo International Arts Festival, Tokyo, Photograph Kohei Matsushima.

When Rabih tells the audience of the death of Bachir, posters of Bachir appear; and when Hatem tells the audience of the death of Hariri, posters of Hariri appear (Figs. 3.52–3.53). Unlike the other martyrs, their images are visible not only on one screen but on all four screens simultaneously. This points to their status as 'celebrity martyrs', as I will elaborate further in 4.3.

At the end of the play, each actor separately hears about the sectarian clashes at the Arab University, and all four protagonists then make their ways towards Murr Tower, where they come together. This meeting is accompanied, above the heads of the actors, by fragmentary images of the building and its urban surroundings. When seen together, these images appear as a panorama (Fig. 3.54). *Nancy* ends with a voice from offstage—according to the script, the words belong to the text of a typewriter—that runs as follows:

**Typewriter:** On Thursday night, January 25, 2007, our units received an anonymous phone call reporting suspicious movement in the whereabouts of the Murr Tower. At once, a unity from the Lebanese Army headed to the aforementioned place, and followed a rigorous search and investigation, found four bodies lying on the rooftop of the Murr Tower—with five combat machine guns at their side. The firearms were duly confiscated and the four bodies arrested. Upon interrogation, the four bodies confessed in full. Eventually, it became apparent that the confiscated firearms were all licensed weapons and that the crimes committed all fell under the General Amnesty Law issued at the end of the civil war. The four detainees were released on bail. (38)

It remains unclear how the four actors died there; however, just as after almost every other death in *Nancy*, they return to life. While the Lebanese Army found five weapons at Murr Tower, they only discovered four bodies. As Mroué explained to me, one person, who also came to Murr Tower, managed to flee and is consequently not present on the couch in *Nancy*.<sup>243</sup>

Only at the end of the play does the audience realise that they were spectators of a confession that the four actors have made about the crimes they committed during the *Wars*. However, these crimes are not legally crimes because they fall under the General Amnesty Law of 1991, and Rabih, Hatem, Ziad, and Lina were released. At the very end of the play, when the actors have already left the stage, original posters from the *Wars*—selected from the posters in Maasri's collection that served as underlying images for the visuals of *Nancy*—appear on all four screens.

### 3.6 Martyr Posters from the *Wars* and Their Appropriation in *Nancy*

The final aspect of *Nancy* that remains to be tackled in this chapter relates to the martyr posters. The makers of *Nancy* are picture-users who select, present, and recontextualise—in other words, appropriate—posters from the *Wars*. They are not replicating these images but are transferring them from a context of visual politics into critical art.

In the following, I will introduce the main theories of appropriation art and give an overview of the parties' poster formats during the *Wars* based on archival material, which is taken mostly from Maasri's collection [signsofconflict.com](http://signsofconflict.com) and the library archives of the AUB. Then, I will outline how *Nancy* appropriates these and, finally, argue that by using strategies of appropriation art the play reveals that all parties involved in the conflicts used similar elements and schemes of image-making.

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.