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

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414   Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 33.

415   Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 123.

celebrity martyrs are, regarding quantity and time, more present and lasting than those of ordinary martyrs. The reason for this difference is that each celebrity martyr embodies a dream of how Lebanon should be in the future. Finally, we will see that images of celebrity martyrs can often be linked to counter-images.

4.3.1 The Blue Group of Lina and the Green Group of Hatem as Reflections of the Hierarchy of Ordinary Martyrs

Nancy shows us that not all deaths are perceived as martyrdoms and that there are hierarchies of martyrs. First, I will discuss the images of the play that I have termed the Blue and Green Groups. Each group consists of three visuals, which, in my interpretation, link to each other. These images accompany three deaths of Lina and three deaths of Hatem, and they appear after each other on the screens above the two actors' heads. I will argue that two of these visuals, read in combination with the text, announce the deaths of both actors as martyrdoms from different points in the hierarchies (*Figs. 3.21–3.22, 3.44, 3.46*). Their deaths, accompanied by two monochromes (*Figs. 3.23, 3.45*), are not registered as martyrdoms. It seems that Lina's death is counted among the thousands of people who went missing during the *Wars*,[416] while Hatem's death goes unnoticed due to a lack of the necessary infrastructure for producing posters.

The Blue Group: Two Different Ranks of Martyrdoms Among Three Deaths

The first image of the Blue Group (*Fig. 3.44*) is a martyr poster of Lina; the second is a blue monochrome (*Fig. 3.45*); the third also depicts a blue monochrome, but in this instance it also includes the logo of the SSNP and Lina's head (*Fig. 3.46*). The first of these (*Fig. 3.44*) was issued after Lina's death in battle. She was increasingly harassed in West Beirut for being Christian, even by her own secular party. Consequently, Lina decided to take a stand:

> So what more did they want me to do to prove to them that I was every bit a National? They wanted me to fight? Fine, fight I shall! In 1981, I ask the central command to transfer me to military duty. After some hesitation, the command grants me my request and dispatches me to the Ras el Nabeh frontline. I am killed right from the first clash. (20)

Despite being Christian, Lina had finally proved her commitment to the cause.

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416   Until the present day, it is unclear how many people disappeared during the *Wars*. The indicated numbers range from three thousand to seventeen thousand. See Lyna Comaty, *Post-Conflict-Transition in Lebanon: The Disappeared of the Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 27–30.

This death is accompanied by a martyr poster with all the elements of the ordinary format, such as the party logo, headshot, and slogan, which commemorate Lina's heroic death in combat. The poster is a direct appropriation of one issued by the SSNP for Nazem Ayyash (*Fig. 3.59*). One can assume he died in combat because the text in the poster mentions that he took part in resistance operations against the Israeli Army and other enemies.

The overall designs of the posters (*Figs. 3.44, 3.59*) are identical. They show a red background with a black square that encompasses the SSNP logo and an image of the martyr in half-profile. Additionally, text that is either black or white appears above the square and against the red background. This text provides the name of the martyr and further information on the death. The slogan declares Lina a 'Martyr Heroine', while Ayyash is labelled a hero.

The inclusion of a female face, however, echoes the commemoration of Sana Muhaidly (*Fig. 3.77*),[417] a member of the SSNP who drove a car with explosives into an Israeli Army post in 1985. She was allegedly the first Lebanese woman to conduct a martyrdom operation.[418] The martyrdoms of Ayyash and Muhaidly are directly linked to the cause of the SSNP and are celebrated by the party. On my reading, the choice to appropriate and fuse these two SSNP posters for the depiction of Lina as a shahida who died in combat is an indication not only that her death in *Nancy* happened for the SSNP but also that Lina, like Ayyash and Muhaidly, died while active against the enemy. It is an affirmation that Lina's death in this instance is unquestionably martyric.

This is not the case with the visual that directly follows on the screen above Lina (*Fig. 3.45*). It shows a rectangular blue surface, and Lina's accompanying speech describes a scene that took place in 1982, when she was crossing a checkpoint between West and East Beirut:

> At the border between Tebbieh and Ras an Nabeh, my husband and I are kidnapped by the Palestinian Organisation for Jihad… They accuse us of being Israeli collaborators […]. They tie up my tongue, blindfold us and take us away in a car. When we arrive at our destination they shoot us […]. A little later, two men lift me up and toss me in the air. I land in water and drown. I learn afterwards that they have thrown my body into the sea—the Mediterranean Sea to be exact. (22)

Lina's words indicate that most of the abductions during the *Wars* happened at checkpoints. In most cases, the kidnapped were killed and buried in mass graves;

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417   That the image of Sana Muhaidly was an underlying image for this poster of Lina was confirmed by Maakaroun, Zoom, 17 February 2021.

418   Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 94; Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 135–37; Straub, *Das Selbstmordattentat*, 99–102. Pape (*Dying to Win*, 38) wrongly affiliates her with the LCP.

others, like Lina, were thrown into the sea.[419] The rectangular blue monochrome seems to point on the one hand to the Mediterranean, into which Lina's body had been thrown, and on the other hand to the non-martyric oblivion of the dead of the missing, for whom no posters were issued, as I will discuss below.

Ironically, as a member of the secular SSNP, Lina was an ally of the Palestinians, who were looking for Christians to kidnap. Soha Bechara narrates a similar incident in her memoirs. In 1976, a cousin of hers was stopped at a checkpoint set up by a Palestinian group and asked for his papers, which labelled him as Christian. Although he was not with the Phalange but a soldier in the Lebanese Army who considered himself politically left and pro-Palestinian, he was executed on the spot.[420] Like Lina, his political convictions did not save him from being killed, as it seems the religion stated in her identity papers, based on which most people were chosen to be kidnapped, had more weight than her party affiliation.

Lina's story in *Nancy* continues after this death. Her body is removed from the water, she returns to life, and lives as a national, anti-sectarian Christian in West Beirut. Eventually, she dies again. This time she is killed by an ambush during her activities with the SSNP in 1984, as she tells the audience:

> Then, on February 6, we organised an insurgency in West Beirut against the biased sectarian Army—by 'we' I mean the Nationalists, along with the Amal Movement, the Morabitun, the Progressive Socialists, the Communists, [...] and many others. Naturally, this insurgency was not altogether free from some minor transgressions. Yazbek's coffeehouse, for example, and the surrounding Mosbeiteh neighbourhood came under attack by Amal's militia... Whereupon I stepped in to resolve the matter amicably and help clear the air... However, I failed to follow up on the task, mostly because I was killed in an ambush they had set up especially for me. (23)

In this incident, Lina neither dies in combat while fighting nor does her body go missing, and her whereabouts do not remain unknown.

Lina's violent death, which was caused by her perceived allies, is remembered by the SSNP in a martyr poster, but it shows only two elements that are part of typical martyr imagery—namely, the SSNP logo and her headshot (*Fig. 3.46*). Other components frequently employed in these posters, such as a slogan and written biographical information about the shahida, are absent. I interpret the inclusion of only a few elements that can be usually found in martyr posters of the *Wars* as an

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419 Erik van Ommering and Reem el Soussi, 'Space of Hope for Lebanon's Missing: Promoting Transitional Justice Through a Digital Memorial', *Conflict and Society* 3, no. 1 (2017): 173; Comaty, *Post-Conflict Transition*, 26. For kidnappings, see Michael Humphrey and Maroun Kisriwani, 'Impunity, Nationalism and Transnationalism: The Recovery of the 'Disappeared' of Lebanon', *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 3 (2001).

420 Bechara, *Resistance*, 50–51.

indication that Lina's death, despite being caused by a friendly militia, is still considered a martyrdom by the SSNP, albeit of a lower rank. Therefore, I would argue that the poster that accompanies Lina's death in combat (*Fig. 3.44*), by including all the typical elements of martyr posters and appropriating posters of SSNP martyrs that died either while fighting or in martyrdom operations, refers to a higher stage of martyrdom and points to a death that is more prestigious than the death commemorated by the poster in which those elements are removed. Although Lina was indeed part of a militia at the time of the latter death, she did not die in combat against the outspoken enemy but was ambushed because of an inter-ally dispute.

Returning to Bonsen's categorisation of martyrs into fighting and civilian martyrs, there is no doubt that Lina, in her first death, is a fighting martyr, but it is difficult to label her a civilian martyr in her third death: although she did not die in active combat, she was still a member of a militia. At the same time, it is not necessary to exactly apply Bonsen's categories. Instead, what Bonsen has shown, and what can also be seen in the reflection of Lina's deaths in *Nancy*, is that there are hierarchies in the deaths of ordinary martyrs.

I do not link the monochrome (*Fig. 3.45*) to any martyr poster of the *Wars*, as it is void of elements typically employed in these. Rather, in my reading, it indicates that this death of Lina is not interpreted as martyrdom by her party, a point I will return to below in my discussion of the differences between the missing and the martyrs. In the following, I will analyse the hierarchy of deaths in another example from *Nancy*, the Green Group, which visualises three deaths of Hatem.

The Green Group: Two Different Ranks of Martyrdoms Among Three Deaths

Like the Blue Group, the Green Group of Hatem hierarchically distinguishes martyrs. The first picture of this group (*Fig. 3.21*) is a poster issued by the Morabitoun, which shows a green background with a black-outlined circle, in which there is a headshot of Hatem wearing sunglasses. A red slogan above describes him as a 'Martyr of Duty' (21). Below, the Morabitoun logo is depicted. The poster includes all the elements typical of martyr posters published during the *Wars*. Hatem died in combat for his militia, as he tells the audience:

> As part of the Morabitun, most of the battles we fought took place in Beirut, with the exception of one battle, which took place in the South—in Nabatieh to be exact. We headed out there as part of a unit of joint forces, to provide backup to the Palestinians in their battle against the Amal Movement. During the battle, a Palestinian mortar falls on our position by mistake. Well, shit happens. Friendly fire. So what? It is Wednesday April 14, 1982. I go home dead. (21)

Hatem narrates that he died as a militiaman of the Morabitoun while supporting the Palestinians in their battle in the South. Although he was accidentally killed by his allies, he is still remembered as a shahid.

The underlying images for this poster (*Fig. 3.21*) are two posters issued by the Arab Socialist Union, an ally of the Morabitoun (*Figs. 3.65–3.66*). The slogan 'Martyr of Duty', colours, typography, and composition are identical, but in *Nancy* the Morabitoun logo has been added. The text tells us that the martyrs of the Arab Socialist Union, Ahmad al-Hujairi and Said al-Bay, died on 30 May 1979. In the spring of this year, fighting took place in the South between the Israeli Army and the Palestinians, as well as their allies, such as the Nasserist parties.[421] Therefore, I assume that al-Hujairi and al-Bay died in combat just as Hatem did. The choice of a poster that remembers someone who died in combat as a martyr for the party seems to confirm the status of Hatem's death as a fighting martyr.

In contrast to the Blue Group, the underlying images are not taken from the party for which the protagonist of *Nancy* died. I suggest that posters of the Arab Socialist Union were chosen because the posters on signsofconflict.com, which was the collection that the graphic designer Maakaroun used when designing the posters for *Nancy*,[422] do not include posters of the Morabitoun in the ordinary martyr format, but show martyrs with other elements and scenes, such as the Holiday Inn, Nasser, or anti-Israeli visuals. This, I would suggest, is the reason why the makers of *Nancy* resorted to posters of an ally of the Morabitoun.

The next poster (*Fig. 3.22*) that is shown on the screen above Hatem's head is a replica of the previous one, but all elements except the green background and Hatem's face in the circular form are removed. This image corresponds to a poster of Lina in the Blue Group (*Fig. 3.46*), which also shows a monochrome background with a circle of the face of the deceased and excludes other elements typically employed in martyr posters; however, in Lina's image, unlike in Hatem's, the party logo is still visible. The circumstances of Hatem's death are a direct continuation of the killing by friendly fire, quoted above. The Palestinians organised a large funeral for him that impressed Hatem so much that he decided to stay with the Morabitoun only officially and to actually fight for Fatah. 'With Fatah', he says, 'I fought in numerous battles and got killed frequently' (21). I would argue that the use of martyr posters issued by a Morabitoun ally as underlying images could point to the fact that Hatem, in this case, died for Fatah. In other words, he died for a militia that was friendly with the Morabitoun, just like the Arab Socialist Union was. Because he died for a faction in which he was not enrolled, I read the visual presentation of his second death as indicative of a martyrdom that is of a lower rank than the martyrdom of his first death. The SSNP logo in the poster of Lina seems to refer to

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421   O'Ballance, *Civil War*, 89–90.

422   Maakaroun, Zoom, 17 February 2021.

the fact that she died as an active and committed member of her party, whereas the absence of the Morabitoun logo in Hatem's poster might hint at his abandonment of his militia at the time of his death.

The third visual of the Green Group (*Fig. 3.23*) shows a green monochrome, which seems to correspond to Lina's blue monochrome, not least because these two visuals appear simultaneously on the screens above the two actors' heads. This last Green Group image accompanies an unusual death. Hatem, still a member of the Morabitoun and fighting for Fatah, decides to leave with the Palestinians for Tunis in 1982, when the PLO was evacuated from Beirut, and is again accidentally killed by Palestinian fire:

> We boarded the boats with the Kalashnikovs ululating and the bullets singing in the air... All of Beirut came to bid farewell to her heroes. There I was, on deck, holding back my tears. Suddenly, I feel something warm on my neck: A stray bullet. Once in Tunis, they transfer me to [sic] hospital where, affected by my bullet wounds, I die a week later. (22)

Hatem speaks of the PLO fighters boarding the ships and of the farewell ceremonies, in which it is certain that not all of Beirut participated, as anti-Palestinian groups such as the Phalangists supported the evacuation and had no interest in honouring their enemies. Nonetheless, the leftist forces that were allied with the Palestinians did indeed bid them farewell by shooting guns and live ammunition. This practice is frequently employed in Lebanon to this day for celebrations or political events, sometimes causing accidental deaths.[423]

As neither this book nor *Nancy* is searching for a historical truth, it is not of interest here whether one or more PLO fighters really died when boarding the ships in 1982. What is crucial is the question of why this death of Hatem is not presented as a martyrdom. When the PLO settled in Tunis, the group had to set up its infrastructure from scratch. According to Salti, none of the PLO poster designers left Beirut for Tunis.[424] This means, unlike Lina, who is not remembered as a martyr because her body was thrown into the sea and therefore her death could not be

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423   There are reports that ninety people passed away because of such unintentional celebratory shootings in 2017. See Chloé Domat, 'I Feel Ecstatic When I Shoot': Lebanon's Problem with Gunfire Celebrations', *Middle East Eye*, 28 September 2017, https://acquiaprod.middleeasteye. net/news/i-feel-ecstatic-when-i-shoot-lebanons-problem-gunfire-celebrations. Hearing and seeing gunfire is not uncommon in Lebanon, especially on weekends when weddings are held. Domat stresses that this practice is not peculiar to Lebanon but common in the region.

424   Rasha Salti, 'The Palestinian Poster: Popularizing National Landmarks and Symbols', in *Palestinian Journeys: Timeline*, ed. Institute for Palestinian Studies, n.d., https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/10528/palestinian-poster. Between 1982 and 1987, the time of the first intifada, only a few posters were produced by the Palestinians.

ascertained, Hatem is not remembered as a martyr due to a reason based on practical grounds; there was no one with the skills to design a poster and therefore the narration of the death could not be transmitted via this medium. It is also possible that the Morabitoun, still in Beirut, might have been unaware of Hatem's death, consequently consigning it to oblivion.

The first image of the Green Group includes all the elements typically employed in martyr posters and appropriates posters of martyrs who died in combat. Therefore, Hatem's death in combat for the Morabitoun is presented—referencing Bonsen's categories—as a fighting martyrdom. However, the second image, which accompanies a death that Bonsen would also term a fighting martyrdom, lacks some elements of the first visual. At the same time, as mentioned above, it is my goal not to apply Bonsen's categories exactly but to emphasise that ranks of ordinary martyrdom exist and that they are visualised in *Nancy* by the exclusion of certain visual elements. Of course, dying for one's own militia appears to be a higher stage of martyrdom than dying for a militia in which one is not enrolled. The monochrome (*Fig. 3.23*) points to the fact that infrastructure and personnel, such as graphic designers, need to be present in order to frame and disseminate a death as martyrdom. If image-makers are absent, the death goes unnoticed.

Hierarchies in the Remembrance of Deaths in the Blue and Green Groups

Considering the posters in combination with the circumstances of Lina's and Hatem's deaths as they are narrated in the text accompanying the Blue and Green Groups, I suggest that *Nancy* reflects the hierarchies of the remembrance of deaths through its choice of underlying images as well as its inclusion and removal of elements that are typically found in martyr posters. Two visuals (*Figs. 3.21, 3.44*) embody the ordinary fighting martyr, who died in combat for his or her own militia and is visually remembered with all the typical components of martyr posters. Two other images (*Figs. 3.22, 3.46*) seem to hint at a lower rank of the ordinary martyr, which is emphasised by the absence of some elements that are usually found in martyr posters. For each actor, there is one death (*Figs. 3.23, 3.45*) that is not remembered as martyrdom by their parties. This is expressed because these deaths are accompanied not by martyr posters but by monochromes. There are reasons for this—namely, the non-ascertained death as well as its oblivion, which is due to the absence of makers of visual memory.

As the reason for Hatem's unnoticed death is peculiar to the PLO rather than pan-sectarian, I will not examine it further. Instead, I will now focus on Lina's death, which addresses the unfinished business of the missing in Lebanon, a topic that pertains to all sectarian groups. In particular, I will elaborate on the question of why the missing are not perceived as martyrs.

4.3.2 The Blue Screen as an Indicator That the Missing Are Not Perceived as Martyrs and the Unfinished Business of the Missing in Context

The thousands of people who went missing during the *Wars* are not remembered as martyrs. By analysing the blue monochrome that accompanies Lina's narration of her disappearance, I will demonstrate how, in my reading, *Nancy* establishes a theoretical discourse on the constructions of the martyr and the missing. Further, I will explore how these two figures are linked to each other and we will see that that the missing are characterised by an ambiguous loss, whereas the faith of the martyrs is clear. The blue monochrome seems to refer to the fact that if Lina's body had been found, it is likely that the SSNP would have declared her as their martyr. Instead, as her whereabouts remained unknown to the party, at least for the duration of the blue screen's appearance, she was probably categorised as a disappeared person; thus, the empty monochrome surface could also hint at her status as missing, as its void literally figures absence.

Such a reading is emphasised when the blue monochrome is linked to *Secrets in the Open Sea* (1994/2004), an artwork by Walid Raad's project The Atlas Group. Each photographic print of the series shows a monochrome in different shades of blue (*Fig. 4.39*). A small black-and-white photo depicting a group of people is visible in the lower-right corner.[425] According to The Atlas Group, the blue prints were found under the rubble in Downtown Beirut in 1992, whereas the photographs were discovered only after the prints had been sent to laboratories in France for analysis, where they

> recovered small black and white latent images from the blue prints. The small images represented group portraits of men and women. The Atlas Group was able to identify all the individuals represented in the small black and white images, and it turned out that they were all individuals who drowned, died or were found dead in the Mediterranean between 1975 and 1991.[426]

It is not relevant for our discussion that this story is fictional. What is important is that there are two images in *Secrets*—namely, the blue monochrome and the black-and-white photograph showing people whose bodies, like Lina's, were found in the Mediterranean during the *Wars*. Like Lina, they probably went missing but did not die as martyrs.[427]

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425   Mroué said that he did not have a link to *Secrets* in mind but rather chose blue here because it is the colour of the sea. Mroué, Zoom, 18 May 2021.

426   Walid Raad, *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007), 107.

427   For more artists dealing with the topic of the disappeared, see Tomb, *War/Identities*, 64–79; Elias, *Posthumous Images*, 93–130.
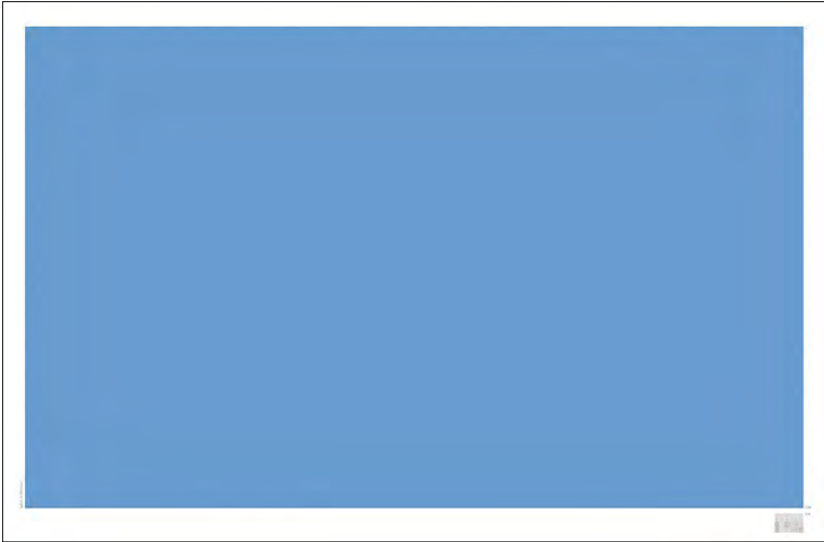
Fig. 4.39: Walid Raad/The Atlas Group, *Secrets in the Open Sea, Plate 19*, 1994/2004, Digital Print, 173 × 111 cm, © Walid Raad, Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

The theme of the missing, which is a central and unfinished chapter of the *Wars*, is also a uniting factor for all sects, as the practice of abducting and killing people was employed by all armed groups involved in the conflicts. Most people were kidnapped for an exchange of hostages, for financial reasons, or for revenge.[428] Unlike the deaths of the martyrs, it is in most cases not clear when or where the missing have died[429]—although it is likely that those who disappeared during the *Wars* are dead. Because the bodies of the missing have never been officially found, some relatives are still hoping for their return, while no one is waiting for the martyrs to physically come back.[430] The loss of the missing, as Walid Sadek writes, remains 'unascertainable'.[431] Similarly, Erik van Ommering and Reem el Soussi speak of an 'ambiguous loss'.[432]

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428 Much has been written about the missing. The most comprehensive publication is Comtay, *Post-Conflict Transition*. For a recent article summarising the wider problem, see Karim Chehayeb, 'The Archivists of Lebanon's Amensia', *Newlines Magazine*, 25 June 2021, https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/the-archivists-of-lebanons-amnesia/.

429 Comtay, *Post-Conflict Transition*, 4.

430 Elias, *Posthumous Images*, 94.

431 Walid Sadek, *The Ruin to Come: Essays from a Protracted Civil War* (Pulley: Motto Books, 2016), 115.

432 van Ommering and el-Soussi, 'Space of Hope', 174.

Fig. 4.40: Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Lasting Images*, 2003, Video Installation – Super 8 mm Film, Variable Dimensions, 3 min, Courtesy of the Artists.

The vagueness of the fate of the missing is explored in *Lasting Images* (2003; *Fig.4.40*) by Hadjithomas/Joreige. In this work, the artists tried developing the last analogue film shot by Joreige's uncle, who disappeared during the *Wars*. The results are images in which only slight shadows and contours are visible. Like the images of the film, the whereabouts of the uncle and all the other disappeared remain unclear.[433]

Most of the remains of the kidnapped are believed to lie in mass graves. Only some of their bodies have been found.[434] In his movie *Erased,_Ascent of the Invisible* (2018), Ghassan Halwani tackles the fact that the Lebanese Army 'found' bones of soldiers killed by the Syrian Army in a mass grave—not coincidentally—shortly after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 and termed these soldiers martyrs.[435] This incident proves that the disappeared could be elevated to martyrs, but—it seems—only if their whereabouts are found. The Lebanese ruling class has no interest in revealing what has happened to the disappeared, as every militia in the *Wars*, and probably many of those individuals in power today, were involved in the kidnappings or at least had knowledge about them.

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433   Tess Takahashi, 'Material Traces of Lebanon: A Documentary Aesthetics of Feeling in the Art Gallery', in *Post 1990 Documentary: Reconfiguring Independence*, eds. Camille Deprez and Judith Pernin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 196–97; Nour K. Sacranie, 'Alternative Remembrances: Memory, History and the Civil War in Contemporary Lebanese Art', *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 9, no. 1 (2016): 12–13; Elias, *Posthumous Images*, 107–10.

434   Comaty, *Post-Conflict Transition*, 51–52.

435   For this incident, see also ibid., 116.

In *Erased*, Halwani also addresses an inconclusive investigation undertaken by Lebanese officials in 2000. This resulted in a suggestion by an army general to stop looking for the missing and to instead build a memorial for them at the Beirut Waterfront District, where many bodies, like Lina's in *Nancy*, had been thrown into the sea. In the movie, the general also suggested labelling the disappeared as martyrs:

> We proposed to the prime minister back then that we had better pay tribute to the families of the disappeared financially and morally, so we proposed to pay the wife or mother of each missing person the amount of 5 million Lebanese Pounds and to erect a memorial for them somewhere with a label that says something like 'Let's remember so we never repeat' or something including the line 'Martyrs of the civil war'. The goal was to close the case.[436]

The reason behind the idea to construct the disappeared as martyrs in this never-executed memorial was not to present them as a heroic examples that should be followed, but to silence the families of the missing by elevating their disappeared relatives to martyrs. The deaths of the missing, paradoxically, should be forgotten via being honoured. The construction of martyrs here would have served to artificially close unfinished business, without resolving questions of justice or culpability. Their deaths are supposed to be consigned to oblivion by naming them shuhada.

Until the present day, the fate of the missing is blurred and thus their remembrance is significantly different from the commemoration of martyrs. In my reading, this is also expressed in *Nancy* via the blue monochrome, which echoes The Atlas Group's *Secrets*. By showing the monochrome instead of a martyr poster, *Nancy* seems to imply that the missing are not perceived as martyrs. It also seems to hint at another fact: while the militias involved in the *Wars* published a visual memorial of their dead martyrs via posters, none has taken care to issue posters of their followers who disappeared during the *Wars*. Back then, the disappearances were announced with a photograph in newspapers only.[437] However, the missing continued to live on in images after the *Wars*, usually circulated by their families.

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436   Ghassan Halwani, *Erased,_Ascent of the Invisible*, Film, 2018. Humphrey and Kisriwan ('Impunity', 130) mention that Hariri also wanted to name the disappeared 'martyrs of Lebanon'.

437   I want to thank Marie-Claude Souaid, from UMAM, for finally clarifying that no posters of the missing had been issued during the *Wars*.

The Missing and the Martyrs: An Afterlife in Images

Photographs of the missing existed in Beirut's urban space after the *Wars* had officially ended, but they were normally not present in posters in the streets. Rather, the disappeared were visually remembered by their families, who formed NGOs, such as *ACT for the Disappeared* and the *Committee of the Families of Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon*. These NGOs focus on finding justice for the missing and establishing what happened to them, a notion that is questioned by Sadek. He argues that the haunting presence of the missing preoccupies their living relatives and absorbs all their attention. Instead of waiting for the return of the disappeared, Sadek suggests performing what he calls the 'labour of missing', which encompasses talking with the absent disappeared in silence.[438] In other words, the relatives should start a dialogue with the missing by talking to them but without expecting an answer, as 'one must learn to converse with silence rather than in silence'.[439] In doing so, the loss could be recognised, and it might be accepted that the person will not return and that their whereabouts will remain unclear.[440] Sadek does not propose that relatives should forget the missing, but instead aims to turn their present absence into something that is more productive than waiting for their return or calling for justice, which is 'terribly rare and painfully unlikely in post Ta'if Lebanon'.[441]

Fig. 4.41: Lebanese Women Hold the Images of Missing Relatives at a Rally in Beirut in front of the National Museum, 2012, Courtesy ANWAR AMRO/AFP via Getty Images.

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438   Sadek, *Ruin*, 115–30.

439   Ibid., 126.

440   Ibid., 129.

441   Walid Sadek, 'A Surfeit of Victims: Time After Time', *Contemporary Levant* 4, no. 2 (2019): 158.

Fig. 4.42: Tent with Images of the Missing, 2015, Beirut – Downtown, Photograph Oriol Gallart, Courtesy of Middle East Eye.

Fig. 4.43: Tent Without Images of the Missing, Beirut – Downtown, September 2021, Photograph AR.

Fig. 4.44: Tent with Images of the Missing, Beirut – Downtown, October 2023, Photograph AR.

However, both NGOs seem not to care too much about Sadek's proposal and hold regular commemorative events for the missing until the present day, at which relatives frequently hold photographic headshots of their loved ones in their hands (*Fig. 4.41*).

These images, which sometimes also include biographical information, such as the name of the disappeared, are not lasting, as they leave the street when the relative does. Additionally, in 2005, the *Committee of the Families* set up a tent in Downtown Beirut and hosted a permanent sit-in to not forget the missing, whose images were put up on the outside of the tent (*Fig. 4.42*).[442] At the time of my research in September 2021, the tent was still standing but had been abandoned (*Fig. 4.43*), with only remnants of adhesive tape and imprints of the photographs remaining. The missing had disappeared a second time, first as people, now as pictures. Two years later, however, I encountered a few images of the disappeared there, although they did not include personal information about the depicted (*Fig. 4.44*). Even when the tent was still a place of congregation and commemoration, the

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442   Comaty, *Post-Conflict Transition*, 77–78.

Fig. 4.45: Missing Exhibition, Poster, UNESCO Palace, Beirut, April 2008, © Monika Borgmann.
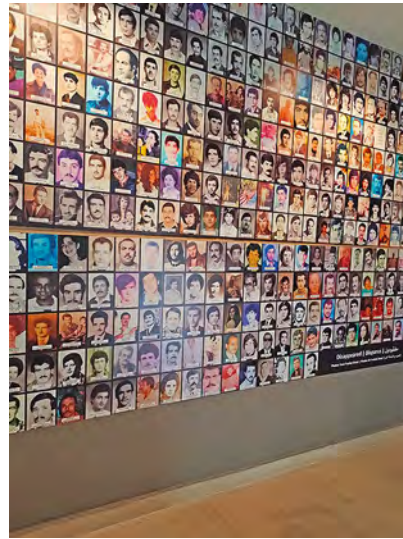
Fig. 4.46: Wall of the Missing, Musée de l'Indépendence, Jounieh, April 2021, Photograph AR.

images of the kidnapped appeared in one specific place in town, and they were not scattered around one sectarian area, as the martyrs were. In other words, the faces on the tent need to be visited, while the martyrs in the posters visit the inhabitants of Beirut.

In 2008, however, the faces of the disappeared did enter the streets in posters. This occurred in the context of advertising for the exhibition *Missing*, which was organised by UMAM. The ID images in frontal view (*Fig. 4.45*) lacked—in contrast to their presentation inside the exhibition space—any biographical information, such as the person's name or the year when they were last seen, and through the large number of faces, the depicted seem to disappear within the poster.[443]

Additionally, images of the missing are presented in the Kataeb-run Musée de l'Indépendence, which, as mentioned in 2.2, presents the Kataeb's narrative of history. Oddly, this sectarian version of the past is interrupted by a large wall showing photos of people who disappeared during the *Wars* (*Fig. 4.46*).

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443   van Ommering and el Soussi, 'Space of Hope', 177; Comaty, *Post-Conflict Transition*, 141; Elias, *Post-humous Images*, 99. See also Norman Saadi Nikro, 'Memory Within and Without the Photographic Frame: Wadad Halwani's *The Last Picture… While Crossing*', *Memory Studies* 12, no. 3 (June 2019): 286–87.

Fig. 4.47: Ghassan Halwani, *Untitled*, 2013, Digging the Wall Searching for a Six-Year-Old Poster, Intervening with a Pencil, 12 cm high, Gemmayzeh, Beirut, June 2020, Photograph AR.

The headshots are the same types of images, and in parts are even identical to, those used by the families and by UMAM. They are, like those inside the UMAM exhibition, accompanied by the missing people's names and ages, along with the dates of disappearance, but as with the poster for this exhibition, individuals disappear in a sea of faces. Although displayed in a museum and not in the street, this presentation is a remarkable exception to the sectarian visual oblivion of the missing. What is even more noteworthy is that the Kataeb shows not only Christian names but also numerous Muslim names, such as Ali, Hossein, or Mohammad. On the wall of the missing, the museum ruptures its sectarian version of history and seemingly perceives the unfinished business of the disappeared as a pan-sectarian issue that needs to be addressed.

The photographs used to represent the missing are, as in the case of the martyrs, ID photographs that migrated to another function.[444] Therefore, it is not the iconography that distinguishes the images of the missing from images of the ordinary martyrs, but the party logo and other symbols that are added to the depiction of the martyrs and are absent in the images of the missing. The similarities in the visual representation of the missing and the martyrs seem to be so striking that Alam mistakes posters of the missing for posters of martyrs in his brief discussion of an untitled wall painting by Halwani, which was created in 2013, is featured in *Erased*, and remains in Gemmayzeh to this day (*Fig. 4.47*).[445] Five years after the abovementioned UMAM exhibition, the artist dug out the posters of this show, which, in a metaphorical analogy to the disappeared buried in mass graves, were

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444   Ibid., 286.

445   Johnny Alam, 'Undead Martyrs', 584. For a discussion of this work, see also Elias, *Posthumous Images*, 102–05.

then buried under a layer of posters on a wall. Halwani was further interested in how a missing person is represented and how he could represent these invisible persons.[446] When finding the remnants of a face, Halwani added black letters with the person's name and birthdate, along with the date and place the missing person had last been seen, next to the individual photograph.[447] In doing so, he attempted to give individuality to the anonymous faces.

Halwani explained to me that he was shocked when he saw that the poster that was advertising the exhibition at UMAM also included an image of his father, who also disappeared during the *Wars*. It was the first time he saw his father's image displayed streetside, and he had not been informed before that these images would appear on a wall in Beirut:

> It was the first time for me to see the face of my father in public. The faces of the disappeared were always very well framed, held as individuals, by the caring hands of their mothers, sisters, brothers, or children. It was the first time I saw those faces amassed altogether inside a design configuration of a grid, with the complete disappearance of the gentle and caring hands of their beloved ones, deprived even of their names, or any detail of familiarity. This was very violent.[448]

Halwani's addition of names was intended as critique of UMAM's exhibition poster, where the missing were rendered nameless and lost in a sea of faces. Certainly, it is not UMAM who is erasing the missing from the public discourse, but the General Amnesty Law of 1991 and therefore the sectarian system.[449]

Being rendered nameless would never happen to an ordinary martyr on an individual poster, neither in the street nor in a museum. Also, most of the collective martyr posters include the names of the dead, as an example from the Communist Action Organisation and an example from Hezbollah prove (*Figs. 4.4, 4.17*). The distinction between the image of the missing and the image of the martyr is not made in the photograph itself, because in both cases, re-used ID photographs are transferred to another context. Images of the missing, in contrast to posters of martyrs, lack symbolism, party branding, the commemorative slogan, and, in many cases, biographical information. While the photos of the missing should raise aware-

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446 Ghassan Halwani, personal conversation with the author, 25 May 2020. Tomb, *War/Identities*, 70 claims that Halwani dug out posters of the missing that the families had put on the walls. Actually, he excavated posters of the UMAM exhibition. I have not heard of any case where families have put up photos of the missing on a wall in Beirut, except for the tent of the *Committee of the Families of the Disappeared* of course.

447 In some cases, he also drew a body for the face; see ibid., 70.

448 E-Mail, Halwani, July 5, 2024.

449 Ibid. The artist said it was not his intention to reflect upon the relationship between the martyrs and the missing (Halwani, personal conversation, 25 May 2020).

ness of their unfinished business, the images of the martyrs act in the framework of visual politics, for instance, by announcing territorial claims and serving as a means of recruitment for the militia, as I have elaborated in Chapter 2.

The martyrs are presented in posters on the streets in their sectarian topography and are sponsored by sectarian groups. The images of the missing, on the other hand, are confined either to exhibition spaces, such as UMAM and the remarkable pan-sectarian remembrance of the Musée de l'Indépendence, or to a tent that they leave only sometimes, when carried by relatives. An exception was the poster for the UMAM exhibition, when the posters of the missing found their way onto the walls but were without names or other biographical information. This de-individualisation was critically reflected by Halwani when he tried to return their personalities, which they, in his understanding, had been deprived of. Today, except for Halwani's excavated poster and occasional appearances of headshots of the disappeared on the tent in Downtown Beirut, images of the missing are absent from Beirut's outdoor walls.

Missing vs. Martyrs: The Same Visual Style and Constructed Remembrance

The missing as well as the martyrs died under violent circumstances. What determines their constructed state of being is the way they are remembered, which also applies to their images. It seems that by using the blue monochrome instead of a martyr poster, *Nancy* points to the almost invisible state of the missing on Beirut's streets today. Had the bodies of the missing been found or their deaths been undoubtedly confirmed, they would have been elevated to the rank of martyrdom, and consequently, their headshots would appear on posters in the streets, and not just as a one-time exhibition advertisement. At the same time, this means that had the bodies of the martyrs disappeared, their faces would have never found their way onto the walls but would have only been published in newspapers and occasionally visible on the walls of the tent in Downtown Beirut.

Moreover, their deaths would have remained unascertained, and the loss would have remained ambiguous. While the missing are still dying an ongoing death without closure, in other words, a death that is not even acknowledged as such, a martyric death is a definitive closure that is intentionally held open. This particularly applies to celebrity martyrs, who are the antithesis of the missing.

4.3.3 Bigger Than Death:[450] The Celebrity Martyrs in *Nancy*

Every sectarian group has one or more leader martyrs, usually someone who held a high-ranking position in his party and is unlike the ordinary martyrs well known in Lebanon.[451] Among these celebrity martyrs, as I call them, the deaths of Bachir and Hariri, who appear in *Nancy* (*Figs. 3.52–3.53*), especially had severe consequences for the country.

We will see in the following that pictures of celebrity martyrs differ from those of ordinary martyrs because their posters are able to do without additional identifying information, as it is common knowledge in Lebanon who they are and how they died. Moreover, posters of celebrity martyrs can invoke collective para-social grief and are a symptom of the inability of celebrity martyrs to die fully. Bachir and Hariri are held alive in images since both men carry a dream of what Lebanon should be in the future. Finally, I will claim that their images provoke counter-images that depict faces that carry dreams opposed to theirs.

The posters of Bachir and Hariri that are used in the play were actually distributed on the walls. However, in the case of the celebrity martyr, these particular images act as placeholders for any of the multitude of posters showing Bachir and Hariri. This is why I will also include other pictures of these two figures in the following discussion.

Bachir and Hariri in *Nancy*: A-Grade Celebrity Martyrs

The posters of Bachir and Hariri appear, unlike all other visuals in *Nancy*, not only on one screen but on all four screens simultaneously and are images that were appropriated as found. Bachir is depicted with an earnest expression, looking upwards (*Fig. 3.52*). Hariri, on the other hand, is shown from his shoulders up, smiling into the camera in front of a Lebanese flag (*Fig. 3.53*).

When Bachir dies, Rabih, a member of the LF at the time of Bachir's death, says:

> On September 14, 1982 they killed Bachir Gemayel. They killed the dream within us… They practically killed us. I felt, that was it: It was all over. The dream was over. I felt my blood dry up. I was ready to do anything, anything to quell my rage. And it was't just me—we all felt the same. (23)

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450   I have taken this expression from an artwork by Sadek titled *Bigger Than Picasso* (1999).

451   For a list of leader martyrs, see Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 97–98.

Fig. 4.48: Kataeb (Photographer Varoujan), Bachir, 1982, Poster, 65 x 95 cm, KBA 1, signsofconflict.com.

Rabih's speech corresponds to what many of Bachir's followers at the time of his death felt, namely the start of the end of the dream of a Christian-dominated Lebanon.

Bachir's image as a political and military leader had already been circulating during his lifetime. An example is a photograph, distributed at the end of the 1970s, that shows him in military gear with crossed arms and thus emphasises his muscularity (*Fig. 3.58*). Another example, discussed by Maasri, is a poster of Bachir's election victory on 23 August 1982, which depicts him sitting on the shoulders of his followers while celebrating his triumph. This very poster turned from an image of joy into an image of grief when Bachir was killed on 14 September in the same year (*Fig. 4.48*).[452] Analogous to the ID images discussed in 4.2, this photograph transformed itself into something else, without actually changing, after the death of the referent.

After Bachir's death, the distribution of his images flourished, and they contributed to his framing as the main martyr of the Lebanese Christians, as elaborated in 4.1. He was remembered, according to Maasri, as 'the heroic figure and role model' that the Phalange 'relied on to lend its struggle credibility and continuity'.[453]

As in the case of Bachir, images from within Hariri's lifetime were turned into posters of a martyr after his death.[454] Hariri was usually depicted in formal dress, most often a business suit and tie, freshly shaven with perfectly done hair, often in front of the Lebanese flag.[455] This is also the case in *Nancy*, where his images accom-

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452 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 62.

453 Ibid., 57.

454 As Knudsen mentions, the slogan 'The Truth' (al-haqiqa) was often added to the post-mortem image ('Death of a Statesman', 2). Today one mostly encounters a simple headshot of Hariri. For the cult of Hariri, see Vloeberghs, Architecture, Power and Religion, 304–17; Khatib, *Image Politics*, 15–29.

455 Souad Al Merheb, 'A Leadership Inheritance: Representing the Father-Son After the Assassination of the Father-Leader', *signsofconflict.com* (2012), http://www.signsofconflict.com/Publications/essay_details?id=14.

pany a speech by Hatem, who at the time of Hariri's death was a seller of Arabic sweets but still felt connected to the Sunni cause. Hatem says:

> February 14, 2005... They killed Rafik al Hariri... They killed the dream within us... They practically killed us. I felt, that was it: It was all over. The dream was over. I felt my blood dry up. I was ready to do anything, anything to quell my rage. And it was't just me—we all felt the same. (33)

Hatem's words are exactly the same as Rabih's when Bachir died; only the date and the name have changed. This seems to point to the fact that every party has its own celebrity martyr who is venerated in similar ways. The reference to his blood drying up hints at the strong emotions the deaths of these leader martyrs caused among their followers. Both Rabih and Hatem feel as if they are part of a collective, which, due to the killing of the leader, has the impression its dream is over.

The sameness of the two actors' speeches, and the sameness of the way the images of Hariri and Bachir are appropriated as found on all four screens simultaneously, point to the fact that not all martyrs are equal; the deaths of celebrity martyrs are considered more important than those of ordinary martyrs. The pictures of Bachir and Hariri do not need any additional information, such as a caption or symbols.[456] They establish a truth claim through their iconic and indexical images because everybody knows what they stand for, and thereby their images become connoted symbols themselves.

Appropriating a poster of a glorified person such as Bachir or Hariri without turning that picture into an homage to the referent is tricky, but it works in *Nancy* first and foremost because the repeated text explicates that there is no intended veneration of Bachir or Hariri. This becomes clear when looking at Alfred Tarazi's work *Beirut Zoo* (2020; *Fig. 4.49*), which consists of a box that has the shape of an ancient Phoenician theatre and contains images that can be moved when handles are turned. The pictures in the left and right panels refer to the history of the Phalange and the history of Israel, respectively, and the middle panel depicts scenes of the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982, including a collage that includes images of animals, corpses, buildings, and Bachir. Tarazi wanted to critically reflect on how history is constructed, and he aimed to visualise the absurdity of Bachir's plan to turn parts of the Palestinian Sabra and Shatila camps into a zoo.

When I look at *Beirut Zoo*, I see a certain veneration of Bachir. This is especially because he is embedded in a shape that is clearly Phoenician and therefore points to the origins of Lebanon in the historical understanding of right-wing Christians, and because Palestinian, Muslim, or leftist narratives of history are absent. Still, I

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456   Al Merheb, 'Leadership Inheritance'.

Fig. 4.49: Alfred Tarazi, *Beirut Zoo*, 2020, Turning Box (Print on Canvas, Wood, Stainless Steel), 120 x 80 x 20 cm, Courtesy of the Artist.

am convinced Tarazi had not the slightest intention to create a shrine for Bachir.[457] Rather, it seems to me that this case is an example of what Graw has claimed regarding the power of the appropriated picture. According to her, images have the agency to strike back and therefore to undermine the intentions of the one who has appropriated them.[458]

Of course, there are celebrity martyrs from other warring factions who have been memorialised in posters, but the images of Bachir and Hariri were more significant. This reflects what Fadi Toufiq told me:

> The deaths of Hariri and Bachir mark a point of the before and after, and things have changed for us. It was kind of a calendar, like marking the point. [...] This is the way we count the days, before Bachir Gemayel was assassinated or after.[459]

Mroué also confirmed this by saying something similar when I asked him why the death of Kamal Jumblatt, the celebrity martyr of the PSP, is mentioned in the written text of *Nancy* but not accompanied by a visual.[460]

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457   Alfred Tarazi, personal conversation with the author, 24 August 2022.

458   Graw, 'Dedication', 83.

459   Toufiq, Zoom, 6 May 2021.

460   Mroué and Toufiq, *Nancy*, 17.

> The assassinations of Bachir Gemayel and Rafic Hariri were two major turning points in the history of modern Lebanon. In contrast, Kamal Jumblatt's assassination never became a turning point like the other two because his son and all the political parties accepted it for political reasons during a 'sensitive political period'. This acceptance allowed his son, Walid Jumblatt, to take over the party (PSP) and his father's role, and they shut the case down immediately. Gemayel's assassination had significant consequences, including the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the invasion and occupation of Beirut by the Israeli Army, and his brother Amin Gemayel becoming the president of the Republic. The Lebanese Forces also split into two factions, one under Samir Geagea and the other under Elie Hobeika. Jumblatt's assassination, like many others in the country, was shut down by the state and political parties due to various reasons and circumstances. Hariri's assassination, however, was a significant issue in Lebanon. This is why I decided to mark these two moments—Gemayel's and Hariri's—in the play.[461]

According to Toufiq and Mroué, compared to the deaths of other well-known martyrs, the deaths of Bachir and Hariri caused severe consequences for Lebanon.

In short, I would argue that *Nancy*, through the incorporation of the images of Bachir and Hariri—without turning them into a possible tribute—, distinguishes the deaths of celebrity martyrs in terms of their importance. Like celebrities, martyrs can be categorised in terms of A-grade and B-grade. Bachir and Hariri would of course be A-grade celebrity martyrs, while other dead people, such as Kamal Jumblatt, would be B-grade celebrity martyrs. Although Jumblatt was a leader martyr, his death did not have as enormous an impact on Lebanon's history as did the deaths of Bachir and Hariri.

The Afterlives of Celebrity Martyrs and the Image of the Celebrity Martyr as a Locus of Collective Para-Social Grief

Celebrity martyrs live on in pictures after their deaths and their images have the ability to invoke para-social grief among followers. Regarding A-grade celebrity martyrs, this applies more to Bachir than to Hariri, probably because it is easier to market the image of a thirty-four-year-old man as a celebrity than that of a man in his early sixties. This is why, in the following discussion, I will primarily focus on Bachir and his portrayal, which, as I claim, is similar to those of celebrities.[462]

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461   Mroué, Zoom, 18 May 2021.

462   Also, Straub (*Das Selbstmordattentat*, 68) mentions that a poster of Palestinian martyrs reminds her of pop-aesthetics—in particular of the Beatles—but she does not delve further into this thought.

The field of celebrity studies commonly defines a celebrity as follows:

A 'celebrity' is a person in the public eye who, for better or worse, has earned fame or infamy, or found renown or scandal, as a consequence of some act or supposed quality, and is celebrated as a result. Today, the word is often associated with people in the entertainment business. Linked closely to fame, and dependent on the media for both public circulation and image evolution, 'celebrity' is a word with a long history and extraordinary cultural significance.[463]

This means that celebrities are well known and are venerated for certain deeds they have performed. At the same time, they need to rely on the media, which distributes their images.

A personality cult that resembles pop stardom also surrounded Bachir during his lifetime. Maasri noted this point when writing about Bachir's visual omnipresence during the *Wars*, explaining that 'posters occupied the streets, schools, universities and homes of Lebanon's Christian regions. Like a pop star, his posters equally adorned the rooms of infatuated adolescents and local neighbourhood shops'.[464] Bachir's hyper-visibility is also addressed in *Nancy*, when Lina talks about the results of Bachir's election as president.

On Monday, August 23, 1982, the Council of Ministers convenes in Fayadieh and elects Lebanese Forces chief Bachir Gemayel as President of the Republic. This causes deep divisions across the country. For Christians, it is as if they'd been bitten by the euphoric bug of victory... And like an epidemic, this euphoric contagion spreads until it reaches the Christians of Moseitbeh. In all naiveté, they start hailing the new president and putting his picture up on their balconies in the middle of West Beirut. I warned them. 'This is a provocation of your National and Muslim milieu—it's not cool' I said. I begged them to at least take down the picture of Bachir in Yazbek's coffeehouse, but no one listened. The whole affair caused considerable damage to us Christians of West Beirut. All eyes began to follow us, suspiciously. (23)

Lina tells us not only of the sectarian joy that had befallen the Christians after Bachir's election, which she compares to a virus, but also of how this very virus manifested itself in the image of Bachir that was distributed by the Christians in West Beirut. His poster invoked two different reactions: on the one hand, the Christians admired the picture; on the other hand, it raised anger and suspicion

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463 Matthew Pratt Guterl, 'Celebrity', *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780195176322.001.0001/acref-9780195176322-e-265?rskey=AVVxuF&result=266.

464 Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 63.

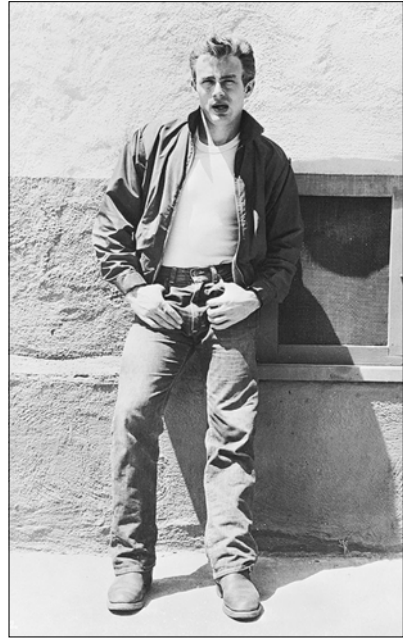Fig. 4.50: Benoit Gysembergh, Bachir, 1978, Photograph, Courtesy of Paris Match via Getty Images.

Fig. 4.51: James Dean Stands on a Wall in a Scene from the Film *Rebel Without a Cause*, 1955, Courtesy of John Kobal Foundation/Hulton Archive/Getty Images.

among rival groups. At the same time, Lina speaks of Bachir's image as being like that of a pop star: omnipresent. It even appeared in West Beirut, where his followers constituted the minority.

The pop star-like perception of Bachir and the ubiquity of his image are also addressed in the animated documentary movie *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) by the Israeli director Ari Folman. The film reflects the memories of Israeli soldiers who were involved in the massacre of Sabra and Shatila. One of the movie's scenes shows images of Bachir on the walls of Beirut, while the voice of one (now-former) Israeli soldier remembers the habits of his Phalangist allies, explaining that 'they always carried pictures of Bachir on them. Bachir pendants, Bachir watches… To them, the man was what David Bowie was to me. A star, an idol, a mega hunk, striking'. I read the Israeli soldier's reference to Bowie as not strictly visual because the androgynous, eccentric, queer imagery of Bowie does not correspond to those images of Bachir that stage him as a military leader.[465] Rather, mentioning Bowie appears

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465   For a discussion of the imagery of Bowie, see Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 134–35.

to be a broad hint at the concept of celebrity imagery, with some images of Bachir showing a similar aesthetic. For example, there is a photograph depicting Bachir standing alone in front of a building with a melancholic expression on his face (*Fig. 4.50*). This picture resembles a famous photo of James Dean taken in 1955 on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause* (*Fig. 4.51*). Both black-and-white photographs show a solitary man standing against a wall and not directly looking into the camera, but dreamily gazing outside the frame. Dean's hands are posed to focus attention on his waist and his shirt is tucked into his trousers, so that, as in the case of Bachir, the upper part of his body is accentuated. I do not claim that this photo of Dean actually served as the underlying image for Bachir's photograph, but I want to suggest with this example that the visual language of stardom found its way into the iconography of Bachir.[466]

Even after their deaths, celebrity martyrs stay alive. Ruth Penfold-Mounce observed regarding the passing of celebrities: 'Death is far from the end of celebrity figures. Instead it is a new realm [...]. The body may be gone, but their image and legacy thrive'.[467] And Kasey Clawson Hudak even argues that deceased celebrities can stay alive only when their images keep on circulating, as otherwise 'their fame would die along with their bodies'.[468]

Bachir's afterlife in images is addressed in Ziad Doueiri's movie *The Insult* (2017), which narrates the story of a minor dispute between Tony, a right-wing Christian mechanic, and Yasser, a Palestinian construction worker in today's Beirut, which leads to a lawsuit. Tony's workshop is full of posters of Bachir. While working, Tony and his colleagues often watch videos of Bachir's speeches, which become the background noise of the workshop. Tony knows Bachir's words by heart; he can even utter them in unison with his idol on the screen. Although Bachir is physically dead, his still and moving images are still part of the life of an ordinary Christian Beiruti citizen in 2017.[469]

Like the photograph of Dean, the images of Bachir in *Nancy*, *Beirut Zoo*, *Waltz with Bashir*, and *The Insult* do not need any caption or explanation of who is depicted, because, as with celebrities—for example, Julio Iglesias, who smiles from behind the Holiday Inn in a poster in *Nancy* (*Fig. 3.9*)—everyone knows who is depicted. The accompanying text of *Figure 3.9* runs as follows:

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466   James Dean is not generally perceived as fulfilling the normative stereotypes of masculinity in the 1950s; see Will Scheibel, 'Rebel Masculinities of Star/Director/Text: James Dean, Nicholas Ray, and Rebel Without a Cause', *Journal of Gender Studies* 25, no. 2 (2016).

467   Ruth Penfold-Mounce, 'Celebrity Deaths and the Thanatological Imagination', in *Death in Contemporary Popular Culture*, eds. Adriana Teodorescu and Michael Hviid Jacobsen (London: Routledge, 2020), 52.

468   Kasey Clawson Hudak, 'A Phantasmic Experience: Narrative Connection of Dead Celebrities in Advertisements', *Culture, Theory and Critique* 55, no. 3 (2014): 389.

469   For a review of the movie, see Max Weiss, 'Ziad Doueiri's *The Insult* and the Returns of the Lebanese Civil War', *Middle East Report* 286 (2018).

> **Rabih**: [...] in the summer of '77 when the war in Lebanon had come to an end, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet Aznavour and my darling Dalida, and also Julio Iglegus—
> **Lina**: Julio Iglesias...
> **Rabih**: [...] and many other celebrities who came to sing for the resurrected Lebanon; the Lebanon rising from the ashes... Seeing as I was head supervisor of security for these festivities, everyone insisted on having their picture taken with me. Above all my friend Julio Iglegus—
> **Lina**: Iglesias. (17)

Rabih tells us of 1977, when he was a militia fighter on a break and working as a security guard because the *Wars* were thought to be over. Julio Iglesias really played a concert in Jounieh. Also, Charles Aznavour and Dalida came for gigs in Lebanon this same year.[470] Fadi Toufiq told me:

> During the civil war there was nightlife. International stars were coming to the country, making concerts; people were attending in between fighting, and the fighting people were having a life. [...] For some people, when you say 15 years of civil war, they will equate that with 15 years of bombing. It is not like this. [...] there are people who fight for a few months in certain areas and then come back to [non-fighting] life. We managed to have a life. [...] We had this summer; it was not official, but we had these 10 months of non-fighting, and in Lebanon, whenever you come back from war, you make parties.[471]

This coexistence of a cult of martyrs and a cult of pop stars, as well as of war and parties, is visualised in the poster that juxtaposes Rabih as a martyr with Julio Iglesias.

Moreover, Rabih here reverses the culture of stardom, which includes taking a picture with the celebrity, by ironically turning himself as the head of security/a martyr into the object of desire with which everyone wants to be photographed. Rabih's inability to pronounce Iglesias's name and Lina's corrections seem to point to the fact that Rabih does not really know who his friends—as he terms them—are. What is important to him is that they are well known. In other words, their status as celebrities is the reason he mentions them. This results in the photo of Rabih and Iglesias together as visible in the poster in *Figure 3.9*. The picture of Iglesias above the Holiday Inn is not extraordinary in terms of aesthetics; as Richard Howells points out, photos of celebrities are valued not for their aesthetics but for who

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470   Marvine Howe, 'Beirut Having Fun Again, but Troops Watch', *New York Times*, 25 June 1977; James M. Markham, 'The War That Won't Go Away', *New York Times*, 9 October 1977.

471   Toufiq, Zoom, 6 May 2021.

they depict.[472] This is also true for the images of Hariri and Bachir. None of their posters are visual masterpieces, nor is the photo of Iglesias in the poster in *Nancy*. But when it comes to the portrayal of celebrities, aesthetics become secondary. What is important is the person who is depicted, because the faces of celebrities, stars as well as martyrs, can invoke emotions.

Howells writes that that pop stars—and, I would add, celebrity martyrs—live through their images in the absence of physical contact, as fans and celebrities usually do not know each other in person. As a result, the image serves as the point of encounter between fan and star.[473] Tony, the protagonist of *The Insult*, is too young to have known Bachir in person, and his relationship with Bachir has been lived only para-socially via images. This term designates a one-sided but deeply felt relationship between fan and celebrity.[474] After Bachir's death, his physicality was completely replaced by his picture, and therefore the relationship between him and his followers became exclusively para-social. Although his followers might not have known him in person, they collectively felt loss and grief over his death. This is also addressed in *Nancy*, when Rabih says, 'I felt, that was it: It was all over. The dream was over. [...] And it wasn't just me—we all felt the same' (23). The para-social grief sensed by the Phalange is also addressed in the documentary movie *Massaker* (2004), to which I will return in 4.4, where Monika Borgmann, the late Lokman Slim, and Hermann Theissen interviewed six former Phalange fighters. One of the interviewees narrates the feelings he had in 1982 about the death of Bachir: 'everything we had lived for had suddenly vanished [...] Bachir Gemayel was dead, and we felt we were too'. By using the word 'we', the interviewee emphasises that, as in the case of the deaths of celebrities, tremendous despair was felt collectively. Grieving an ordinary martyr, on the other hand, takes place in more individual realms. The pain about the loss is caused by a genuine connection; the mourners knew the deceased in person.

As I have shown with the example of Bachir, the veneration of images of celebrity martyrs is comparable to the adoration of images of pop stars and other celebrities. The person being depicted is more important than the aesthetics of the photograph. Sometimes images of celebrity martyrs taken during their lifetimes evoke star iconography, as I have suggested with the comparison of Bachir and Dean. Post-mortem, both live on in the image, which invokes para-social grief, a real collective emotion felt by their fans and followers. These points are reflected

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472   Richard Howells, 'Heroes, Saints and Celebrities: The Photograph as Holy Relic', *Celebrity Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 124.

473   Ibid., 113.

474   Hilde van den Bulck and Anders Olof Larsson, '"There's a Starman Waiting in the Sky": Mourning David #Bowie on Twitter', *Convergence* 25, no. 2 (2019): 309.

in *Nancy* via Lina's remarks on the presence of Bachir's poster in West Beirut, as well as via the appearance of an aesthetically ordinary poster of Bachir on all four screens, showing him gazing dreamily towards the sky, while Rabih's accompanying speech points to the collective para-social grief felt by Bachir's followers. This grief is linked to the dream each celebrity martyr carries.

The Carrier of the Dream: The Celebrity Martyr on the Threshold Between Life and Death

Each celebrity martyr carries a sectarian dream regarding the political shape of Lebanon—a dream that has not yet been implemented but is supposed to be realised in the future. As mentioned above, the physical death of a star, as well as of a celebrity martyr, does not result in their final extinction because their picture and legacy remain. Celebrity martyrs, although physically dead, stay alive in posters.

The ability of the celebrity martyr to persist on the wall is contrary to that of the ordinary martyr, whose poster production is usually shut down at some point, as addressed by Elias Khoury in his novel *White Masks*. Khoury narrates that three years after the martyrdom of the LCP militiaman Ahmad, the party refused his father's request to reprint Ahmad's martyr posters.[475] This means Ahmad was held alive in images for three years after his passing but finally died fully when the party decided to cease the production and distribution of his images. The poster of the celebrity martyr, however, keeps on being printed and distributed for decades, like the above-mentioned poster of Bachir (*Fig. 4.48*), which was put up after his election victory in 1982 and shortly after turned into a poster of a martyr. Maasri still saw this image in Ashrafieh in the 2000s.[476] And I also encountered it in 2020, in an odd combination with the rubble of the explosion that surrounded it. An added slogan labelled Bachir as 'The Dream of the Republic' (*Fig. 4.52*).[477]

Fig. 4.52: 'The Dream of the Republic', Beirut – Gemmayzeh, September 2020, Photograph AR.

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475   Khoury, *White Masks*, 21–22.

476   Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 62.

477   Also, Haugbolle encountered posters of the Kataeb that announce that 'Bachir is the Dream and the Truth' (*War and Memory*, 179).

The ongoing visual presence of Bachir is linked to the dream referred to by Rabih in *Nancy*, which is carried by the celebrity martyrs. This phrase indicates that Bachir stands for the entire idea of a Maronite Christian-dominated Lebanon, in which the Syrian-Iranian influence is absent and the factions of the March 8 alliance are weak players. This dream not only forms a collective group identity but also is supposed to be implemented in the future, so that the death of the leader was not in vain.

To understand the essence of the Lebanese cause, or dream, from the perspective of the Lebanese Christian right-wing parties, I draw on Jabre's sectarian publication about Christian posters. He characterises the goal of the 'resistance', as he describes the united Christian groups during the *Wars*, as follows:

> Culturally [...] [f]or them [the Lebanese Christians], losing the war meant losing their identity and seeing their culture merge into an Arab-Muslim culture which doesn't represent them. This would undoubtedly have an impact on their lifestyle, like other Eastern Christians who are reduced to the status of second-class citizens. Finally, the political victory is revealed by the will of the Resistance to rally the [sic] Lebanese Islam to its main cause, namely the final recognition of Lebanon as an independent country, a refuge for persecuted minorities throughout history, and the firm refusal of the establishment of Palestinians. The [sic] political Maronitism will succeed post mortem, when in 2005 the Sunnis will adopt the slogan of Bachir Gemayel, 'Lebanon First'.[478]

In Jabre's statement one can clearly read anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian sentiments along with the idea of a Christian-dominated Lebanon, which is disguised under the narrative of resistance. Of course, the fact that a slogan of Bachir's was adapted by the Future Movement does not mean that political Maronitism has succeeded after the *Wars*. What Jabre here refers to is that Sunnis, Druze, and most of the Christian parties allied together in the March 14 block.

Hariri's aim was to rebuild the country as a financial and touristic regional hotspot, one that was grounded in a pan-Arabist ideology and that maintained good connections with Europe and the US but particularly with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.[479] His dream or cause, like that of Bachir, stands in opposition to that of the March 8 alliance, who advocate for a heightened Syrian-Iranian presence in Lebanon. Sadek links these two divergent dreams to the fact that Lebanon is stuck between two different, coexisting chronotropic conceptions of time. For the Future Movement, the assassination of Hariri announced the beginning of a 'Messianic Waiting Time' for justice to be delivered by the tribunal that was set up

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478   Jabre, *Lebanese Resistance Posters*, 26.

479   For Hariri's ideological position, see Knudsen, 'Death of a Statesman'.

in The Hague to examine the murder. According to Sadek, the time until the issuing of the verdict was suspended.[480] The March 8 camp, however, lived in the 'Time of the Umma', which was announced by Hezbollah's secretary general Hassan Nasrallah during the Tammuz War as a counter-time to that of the Future Movement. Hezbollah's time—and, in a wider sense, the March 8 movement's time—is that of an immediate now, an urgent present caused by an Israeli threat.[481] The end of the 2006 War did not end the Time of the Umma. According to Sadek, the 2008 street fights between Hezbollah and the Future Movement in West Beirut were a 'standoff between the two conceptions of time'.[482]

These two colliding times also encompass the ideas of what Lebanon should be in the future and the dreams the celebrity martyrs carry. As Sadek writes:

> In struggling to overshadow one another, these two conceptions of national time mark an exacerbation of strife in Lebanon. Hizb Allah, leading a coalition of parties opposed to Hariri's Future Movement, strive to fix the identity of [Lebanon] through its leading Shi'i model of armed resistance to Israeli military expansionism and American imperialism, while the Sunni Future Movement [...] claims to represent a Lebanese democratic forefront of a pan-Arab identity, born of its resistance to a dictatorial Syrian Ba'ath regime. Important to add, for pro-Hariri Sunnis this resistance only begins with the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and includes, out of mere courtesy, preceding practices of resistance to the Syrian regime by various Christian and Druze militias and political parties.[483]

In this passage, Sadek claims that Hariri's death heralded a new time for the Future Movement, while the March 8 movement lives in another time and dreams another dreams.

A new time also began for the Phalange after the death of Bachir, but it was not a time of waiting for the day of his killer's trial. Rather, the Phalange took revenge in the days after Bachir's killing by committing the Sabra and Shatila massacre. For the Phalange, the murder of Bachir symbolises the beginning of the catastrophe, when the Maronite dream state that seemed to be almost here after Bachir's election started to slip away. Nonetheless, although Christian supremacy seems to be out of reach at the moment, the idea is not dead yet. Both the Kataeb and the LF are still waiting for the return of the near-dominance that political Christianity achieved in 1982. This moves the time they live in closer to the Messianic Waiting Time of the Future Movement than to the Time of the Umma of Hezbollah.

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480   Sadek, *Ruin*, 93–94.

481   Ibid., 92–93.

482   Ibid., 97.

483   Ibid., 93.

Sadek's conception of clashing and coexisting times was manifested at the time of writing. In March 2023, the Lebanese government spontaneously decided to postpone the international summertime—which meant that the sun would set one hour earlier—so that people who observed Ramadan could break their fast sooner. This led to practical problems, such as a lack of clarity around international flight arrival times, as well as to general confusion, because many institutions and businesses decided to ignore the government's decision. Furthermore, parts of the Christian population felt that not changing time was an affront against them and that it favoured Muslim needs. Again, time drew a rift along sectarian lines. After a few days of slight chaos, the government reversed its decision, and Lebanon followed Coordinated Universal Time once again.[484]

The coexistence of conflicting times and dreams in Lebanon is also embodied in *The Insult*, namely, through the portrayal of Tony, who is blinded by Bachir's dream, and Yasser, who lives in the Palestinian Mar Elias refugee camp. We see the camp in only one scene, where it is full of posters of Yasser Arafat (Abu Ammar), who is not a martyr but during his lifetime had a celebrity status among the Palestinians that was similar to the status Bachir had among the Lebanese Christians. We could assume that Yasser would support the March 8 movement, and Tony would support the ideas of the March 14 movement. At the end of the movie, the two men, together with their lawyers, meet at court. Officially a case about a minor physical dispute is heard but in actuality, the clashing times, dreams, and versions of history of the inhabitants of Lebanon are negotiated. A part of the evidence at this court hearing is a video of a hate speech against the Palestinians by Bachir. The playing of this video provokes great emotions and Yasser, who is apparently saddened and embarrassed, perceives it as an insult, while the Christian court audience cheers for Bachir's words and image.

That the images of celebrity martyrs can indeed evoke tensions is demonstrated by incidents that manifest the two clashing times. In 2016, the Kataeb held a commemoration for Bachir at the AUB, which provoked SSNP supporters to burn a poster of Bachir at the ceremony. Consequently, scuffles between the SSNP and the Kataeb broke out in front of the university.[485] The March 8 movement, of which the SSNP is part, blames Bachir for his political actions, which is why his poster is encountered and treated with rage. On the other hand, right-wing Christians perceive the same poster as deserving praise and admiration, and the fact that it was destroyed elicited anger.

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484   L'Orient Today, 'Lebanon Will Officially Shift to Summer Time Overnight Wednesday to Thursday', *L'Orient Today*, 27 March 2023, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1332824/lebanon-will-officially-shift-to-summer-time-overnight-wednesday-to-thursday.html.

485   Daily Star, 'Bachir Gemayel AUB Memorial Sparks Scuffles', *Daily Star*, 26 April 2016.

Another incident, which occurred in March 2022 at the Arab Book Fair in Beirut, was connected to a poster of the Iranian general Qassem Soleimani. Soleimani was murdered by a US drone in Iraq in 2020. Immediately after his death, his image became omnipresent, practically everywhere in Iran and also in Shia parts of Lebanon.[486] In a Lebanese context, Soleimani acts as a celebrity martyr of Hezbollah. His image stands for the March 8 movement and a Lebanon closely tied to Iran and Syria and the Time of the Umma. The presence of his poster outraged a visitor to such an extent that the visitor started to punch it, which led to scuffles that were calmed by riot police, who came to the book fair and ended this clash of times and dreams.[487] The burning and punching of images is equivalent to doing violence to the dream and time for which the martyr stands and it proves how strong the emotions connected to these images are. The picture of any ordinary martyr would not have been able to evoke such rage.

In *Nancy*, after the killings of Bachir and Hariri, Rabih and Hatem say 'they killed the dream in us'. The anticipated dream was assassinated when the celebrity martyr was killed. In this way, the power of killing collective hopes and dreams or starting a new time is attached exclusively to celebrity martyrs, whereas the loss of an ordinary militiaman could be resolved, as the whole cause was not attached to this individual.

Nonetheless, even after the deaths of Bachir and Hariri, the dream was not killed forever but, like the actors in *Nancy*, quickly came back to life. The successors of the celebrity martyrs have tried to implement the dream, but always under the shadow of the celebrity martyr, which is also reflected on social media. An example is a 2020 tweet from Bachir's nephew, Samy, who is currently leading the Kataeb:

> My companion President Bachir Gemayel, we remember you today along with all the other martyrs who have been assassinated with you. With your martyrdom, a myth was born that inspires young and old people to always defend Lebanon [...]. We pledge you to always keep your promise and your courage.[488]

486   Amir Ahmad Arian, 'The Martyrdom of Soleimani in the Propaganda Art of Iran', *The New York Review*, 30 September 2020, https://www.nybooks.com/online/2020/09/30/the-martyrdom-of-soleimani-in-the-propaganda-art-of-iran/?lp_txn_id=1422923.

487   Farah-Silvana Kanaan, 'Brawl Breaks Out at Beirut Book Fair After Visitors Try to Remove Qassem Soleimani Poster', *L'Orient Today*, 7 March 2022, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1292871/scuffle-breaks-out-at-beirut-book-fair-after-visitors-try-to-remove-qassem-soleimani-painting.html.

488   Kataeb.org, 'Kataeb Leader to Martyr Bachir Gemayel: We Will Always Keep Your Promise and Your Courage', *kataeb.org*, 14 September 2020, https://en.kataeb.org/articles/local-2020-09-14-kataeb-leader-to-martyr-bachir-gemayel-we-will-always.

In this para-social conversation between the living nephew and the physically dead uncle, Samy points out that Bachir is a specific kind of martyr, one whose death acts as a role model for what Samy perceives to be the defence of Lebanon. Furthermore, Samy taps into the myth of the Christian resistance and assures his uncle that he will keep working on the realisation of his uncle's promise, which equals the dream.

Also, Saad Hariri, Rafic's son and a politician of the Future Movement, addressed his assassinated father directly in 2011:

> Dear beloved father, Lebanon's great martyr: Do I talk to you or about you? Or should I tell you the story of the difficult years we experienced? […] This day is yours, my beloved father. […] I am filled with joy because I am the son of martyr Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.[489]

These examples show that Bachir and Hariri stay alive not only in the posters that are produced and distributed until today, but also in sectarian remembrance. This is especially evidenced by the fact that they are addressed in the present tense by Samy and Saad, which refers to their position as being on the threshold between life and death. Furthermore, the continuation of the dream through their successors is visualised, as the celebrity martyrs are included in some of their successors' posters.

Bachir, who is today the celebrity martyr of the LF as well as the Kataeb, appears on posters together with his two successors: his son Nadim, a Kataeb politician, who was the party's candidate in the 2022 elections, and the current leader of the LF, Samir Geagea. I encountered an image of Geagea on Sassine Square, in the aftermath of the 2021 Tayyouneh clashes, in a remarkably smaller size than Bachir, who was hung up high on the wall (*Fig. 4.3*). In the election campaign of 2022, Bachir appeared next to Nadim (*Fig. 4.53*) and Hariri in posters for current candidates (*Fig. 4.54*) of his party, just as he was earlier depicted next to his son Saad, who became his political successor right after his death (*Fig. 4.55*).[490]

Fig. 4.53: Posters of Bachir and Nadim Gemayel, Beirut – Ashrafieh, June 2022, Photograph AR.

489   Cited in Knudsen, 'Death of a Statesman', 12.

490   Schmitt, *Advertised to Death*, 28, 31, 40–43.

Fig. 4.54: Posters of Hariri and Election Candidates, Beirut – Zoukak el-Blat, May 2022, Photograph AR.

Fig. 4.55: Rabih Mroué, *Make Me Stop Smoking* (Election Poster, Saad and Rafic Hariri), 2006, Non-Academic Lecture, Courtesy of the Artist.

Souad al Merheb has claimed that the juxtaposition of predecessors and successors constitutes a legitimisation and promotion of the successor's leadership, among other factors, because of the emotions attached to the image of the celebrity martyr.[491] In particular, I would argue this is because of collective para-social grief. The placement of Bachir and Hariri into or next to the image of the successors also holds alive the dream and the promise that the celebrity martyrs embody and manifests that fulfilment is now in the hands of the successors.

As mentioned in 3.4, Mroué comments in *Inhabitants* on a photomontage that shows Rafic Hariri next to the former Egyptian president and advocate of Pan-Arabism, Gamal Abdel Nasser, in an encounter that could never actually have taken place due to the different lifetimes of the two men, with Hariri being older than Nasser (*Fig. 3.3*):

> we can say that someone [...] wanted to [...] create some sort of controversial scandal, or a mobilisation call for struggle, or for the purpose of moral support, in favour of the power of Hariri's son, who asked a designer to fit the two men [Hariri and Nasser] by force in the same picture to show that he is the heir of a dignified, pan-Arab tradition.[492]
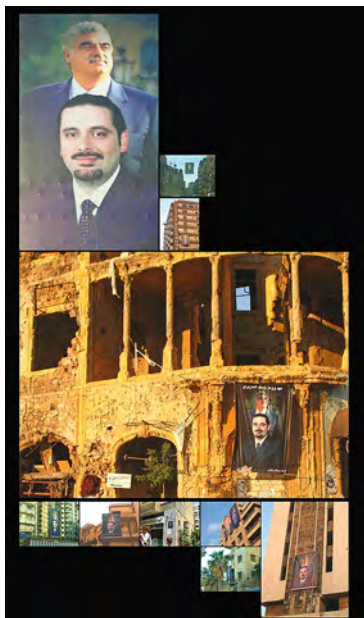
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491   Al Merheb, 'Leadership Inheritance'.

492   Mroué, 'Inhabitants', 340.

In this statement, Mroué suggests that the author of the image is a supporter of Saad Hariri, who, by juxtaposing Nasser and Rafic in one poster, claims to be the rightful heir to his father's and Nasser's Pan-Arabist project. Soon after, in *Inhabitants*, Mroué addresses the above-mentioned dream carried by Rafic, which is now passed on to Saad:

> The father, a liberal, modern, Pan-Arab Sunnite Moslem, invites Nasser, also a Sunnite Moslem, also modern, also Pan-Arab to meet with him. Nasser responds to this meeting, and comes to pledge allegiance to Hariri's son, the heir of the true Arab line. […] The Arabism stands in opposition with the Shiite Islamic Project, which demonstrates loyalty to Iran. From another angle, Hariri is welcoming Nasser in order to reassure him that his Arabism is not dead, and that Nasserism is still alive within us; it will remain alive as long as the Hariri son is carrying its flag, and fighting any outsiders, whether the outsider is represented by the Shiite Iranian Islamic Project or the Zionist Israeli-American Project, or the new colonialist Western project.[493]

Mroué comments on the inheritance of Rafic's dream—namely of an Arab, Sunni-led Lebanon, influenced by Nasser's Pan-Arabist frame of thought—by Saad. This very dream that has now been passed on to Saad stands in opposition to all other dreams, particularly that of the March 8 alliance, which includes political and cultural proximity to Iran and Syria.

Hariri's dream of how Lebanon should be is as utopian as all the other dreams which the celebrity martyrs carry. In its geopolitical function as a balance zone between neo-colonial international players, Lebanon will never be fully Maronite, fully Iranian- and Syrian-dominated, or fully pan-Arabic.[494] Similarly, the time the country is in will never be either a Messianic Waiting Time or a Time of the Umma, but always both. It is via posters that dreams, as things that are uncompleted and worth fighting for, are held alive. When Bachir and Hariri passed away physically, they did not die fully but, like celebrities, stayed alive in the realm of the image that still carries their dream. Their posters remain on the walls much longer than those of ordinary martyrs. Bachir and Hariri also often appear in or next to posters of their successors, who are now charged with realising this very dream.

However, as Lina mentions in *Nancy* regarding the installation of an image of Bachir in West Beirut: 'this is a provocation of your national and Muslim milieu—it's not cool' (23), celebrity martyrs, both before and after their physical passings,

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493   Ibid., 344.

494   For an analysis of Lebanon's situation of being stuck between regional powers, specifically with regard to some security incidents that happened in the summer of 2023, see Yara Abi Akl, 'Is There a Link Between the Recent Spate of Security Incidents?', *L'Orient Today*, 11 August 2023, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1346177/is-there-a-link-between-the-spate-of-security-incidents.html.

are not perceived as heroes by everyone, as Bonsen has also claimed when writing that 'one's heroic martyr is another's 'butcher''.[495] For example, in the eyes of the SSNP, Bachir is a perpetrator, and the party instead celebrates his assassin, Habib Shartouni, in posters.

The Poster of the Counter-Hero: The Carrier of the Counter-Dream

Unlike ordinary martyrs, whose killers are not part of the public memory, it is well known in Lebanon that Bachir was murdered by SSNP members Nabil Alam and Habib Shartouni, and that the UN tribunal in The Hague convicted Hezbollah member Salim Ayyash of having killed Hariri.

In the following, I will discuss the pictures of the (alleged) killers of the celebrity martyrs as counter-heroes. Although they are still alive, their visual presence encompasses elements typically employed in martyr posters and their images presuppose the image of the celebrity martyr.

In the case of Bachir's killers, Shartouni's name and face gained more prominence than Alam's. It seems this is because Alam is said to have provided the explosives, but Shartouni was the one who carried out the actual murder by pressing the detonation button that caused the explosion and the subsequent death.[496] I could not find any posters depicting Alam, but Shartouni is remembered on at least two posters (*Figs. 4.56–4.57*).

The first of these (*Fig. 4.56*) was issued in 1982, shortly after Shartouni had been jailed, and it demanded his release, as the caption, 'Freedom to the Imprisoned Militant Habib Shartouni', tells us. The poster shows a headshot of Shartouni in a rectangular frame. The accompanying writing is in black and red, with the Jammoul logo visible above. The same photograph of Shartouni's face can be seen in the second poster (*Fig. 4.57*), which was issued in 1984 and shows his portrait rendered in red within a white circle on a black background. Above and below his face, white text reads: 'On the 9th Commemoration of One of Their Most Atrocious Massacres; We Salute You Who Executed the People's Judgment Over the Butcher. 13 April 1984'. This means that the poster was released on the ninth anniversary of the official

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495   Bonsen, *Martyr Cults*, 106.

496   Another reason might be that Shartouni seems to be still alive, while Alam passed away in 2014. For the assassination of Bachir and Shartouni's role and the trial, see Scott Preston, 'Lebanon's Civil War Scars Re-Emerge with Assassination Case Verdict', *Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*, 27 October 2017, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2017/10/lebanon-bashir-gemayel-killer-sentence-timing.html; Solomon, *In Search*, 111–12.

Fig. 4.56: LNRF/SSNP, 'Freedom to the Imprisoned Militant Habib Shartouni', 1982, Poster, 45 x 60 cm, ASH 2, signsofconflict.com.

Fig. 4.57: Friends of Habib Shartouni, 'On the 9th Commemoration of One of Their Most Atrocious Massacres. We Salute You Who Executed the People's Judgment Over the Butcher. 13 April 1984', 1984, Poster, 32 x 47 cm, AAJ 76, signsofconflict.com.

beginning of the *Wars*. The writing also tells us that it was issued by the 'Friends of Habib Shartouni'—in other words, as Maasri suspects, the SSNP.[497]

Both posters correspond in terms of composition and colours to two different SSNP serial martyr poster designs (*Figs. 4.58–4.59*). While in *Figures 4.56* and *4.59* a rectangular photograph is placed in the middle of the image, with the Jammoul logo above and writing below, in *Figures 4.57* and *4.58* the photograph is depicted in red within a circle on a black background with white writing above and below.

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497 Maasri mentions the contrast of colours and argues that the posters commemorating Bachir are usually in white and bright colours, and that the posters of Shartouni are dominated by black (*Off the Wall*, 77–78). But Maasri only discusses *Fig. 4.57* and not *Fig. 4.56*, which is dominated by white. This is why I do not necessarily see a binary of black posters of Shartouni and white posters of Bachir.
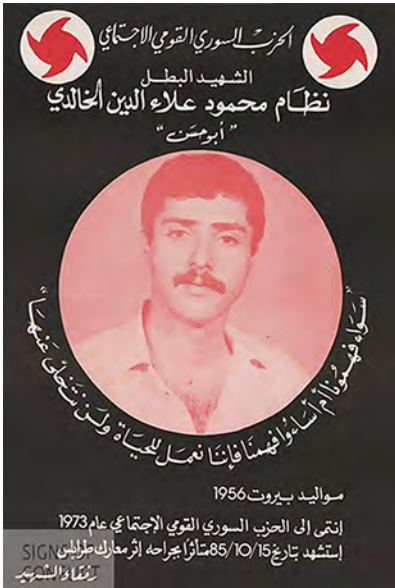
Fig. 4.58: SSNP, 'The Heroic Martyr Mahmoud Alaaeddine Al-Khalidi', 1985, Poster, 31 x 47 cm, AAJ 478, signsofconflict.com.
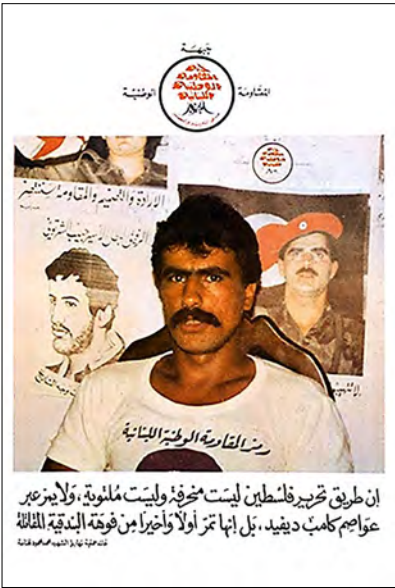
Fig. 4.59: LNRF/SSNP, 'The Road to the Liberation of Palestine Is Not Crooked and Does Not Pass by the Capitals of Camp David. But It Passes First and Foremost from the Nozzles of the Fighting Rifles. The Leader of the Naharya Operation the Martyr Mohammad Mahmud Kanaa', 1986, Poster, 45 x 60 cm, AAJ 81, signsofconflict.com.

The poster in *Figure 4.59* was issued for SSNP member Mohammad Mahmud Kanaa's martyrdom operation in 1986. Kanaa is depicted in front of posters of his preceding martyrs and a poster of Shartouni.[498] I read the SSNP's application of the martyr poster's visual language to the depiction of Shartouni as well as the placement of his poster among martyr posters as an expression of the fact that in 1982, as well as in 1984 and 1986—the times when the posters were issued—he was imprisoned and potentially awaiting death. Put differently, employing martyr imagery for a living man seems to point to his suffering and determination for the cause. His deeds, namely, the killing of Bachir, should be honoured like the deeds of martyrs who sacrificed their lives.

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498   Straub (*Das Selbstmordattentat*, 128–29) discusses this poster but does not recognise the image of Shartouni in it. Straub also mentions another SSNP member and conductor of a martyrdom operation, Wajdi Sayigh, and notes that in his martyrdom video he calls for the Kataeb to release Shartouni (ibid., 110).

When the Syrian Army took over Ashrafieh in 1990, Shartouni managed to escape from prison to Syria. His current whereabouts are unknown, but it can be assumed that he was alive in 2017 because of an interview he gave to *al-Akhbar* newspaper after he was sentenced to death in absentia in that year for having killed Bachir. When the trial took place, members of the SSNP organised protests and paraded images of Shartouni outside the court. They claimed that the killing of Bachir was 'a national duty, not a crime'; or, as one of their supporters said, 'This was not a political killing rather it was done to carry out justice'. The Kataeb held counter demonstrations and held up posters of Bachir outside the court.[499]

The presence of these images in 2017 demonstrates how the celebrity martyr Bachir and the counter-hero Shartouni embody conceptions of Lebanon. In the case of Bachir, the dream is Maronite Christian, under the umbrella of the March 14 movement. In the case of Shartouni, the dream is a pro-Syrian Lebanon under the umbrella of the March 8 movement. In other words, two divergent ideas of what Lebanon should be and of the time in which Lebanon exists, which are similar to the two sides of the court case of *The Insult*, clash in the posters of the protagonists of Bachir's killing.

The inclusion of Shartouni's face in a poster displayed in the streets presupposes the existence of the poster of Bachir. Bachir's face is naturally frozen in time because, after 1982, no further pictures could be taken, and thus he stayed, like James Dean, eternally young. Shartouni's face also remains frozen in 1982. Of course, for Shartouni's own security as a wanted person, his present likeness as a man in his sixties is not distributed in public, but this is not the primary reason his face, photographed in the early 1980s, became an icon of the SSNP. His face at this very particular moment symbolises a dream of what Lebanon should be, one that is contrary to what Bachir's face, photographed at approximately the same time, embodies. A photo of Shartouni's face from the 2020s would not be immediately linked to him and therefore would not be instantly loaded with meaning. Thus, the same face that appeared on the poster issued in 1984 was still visible during the trial in 2017.

Just as Bachir is a celebrity to the Kataeb and the LF today, Shartouni inhabits a certain position of stardom, as Scott Preston, a journalist who covered the trial, has observed:

> Yet the sentencing has exposed political divisions across the country, as many leftists regard Shartouni with the estimable stardom that Lebanese Christians confer upon Gemayel. For supporters, Shartouni is perceived as a defender of Lebanon amid fears that Gemayel would have consented to wider Israeli influence in the country.[500]

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499   Joseph Haboush, 'Court Sentences Bachir Gemayel's Killers to Death', *The Daily Star*, 21 October 2017.

500   Preston, 'Lebanon's Civil War Scars'.

Preston rightly notes that the political division was just exposed and not created through these images. Shartouni became a celebrity hero among Bachir's adversaries because he killed Bachir. Had he killed a Phalange militiaman, he and the militiaman would have fallen into oblivion—Shartouni immediately, and the militiaman at the end of his poster production.

Furthermore, this murder would have been pardoned due to the General Amnesty Law of 1991. But, because he killed Bachir, Shartouni at least in theory, would have needed to appear in front of a court because only the killings of political leaders during the *Wars*, including Bachir, are legally considered crimes. The murders of ordinary martyrs do not get tried, even when the killers hold a well-known position in Lebanon, as the example of Mohamad Fahmi shows. Fahmi, while being interior minister, stated on TV in the summer of 2020 that he had killed two people during the *Wars*. As these two people were not well known, their murders will remain unpunished until eternity.[501] The existence of trials is reserved exclusively for the murder of celebrity martyrs.

Taking up the position of the counter-hero is not limited to Shartouni. The Hariri Tribunal, which had investigated the circumstances of Hariri's murder since 2009, announced its long-awaited sentence in August 2020 and declared that Hezbollah member Salim Ayyash was guilty of having killed Hariri.[502] In the same month, a banner depicting Ayyash was visible in his hometown of Harouf in the South (*Fig. 4.60*).[503] A red frame shows an ID photograph of Ayyash, who wears a checked shirt and sports a moustache and earnest expression. A slogan reads, 'The People of the Town of Harouf Are Proud of Their Resistant Son, Hajj Salim Ayyash'. While this banner does not correlate as strongly with the Hezbollah martyr posters as the posters of Shartouni do with the formats of the SSNP martyr posters, the exposure of an ID photo that no longer functions as an image used for identification and a slogan in a street is reminiscent of martyr posters.

Fig. 4.60: 'The People of the Town of Harouf Are Proud of Their Resistant Son, Hajj Salim Ayyash', 2020, Banner.

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501   MEMO, 'Lebanon: Interior Minister Admits Killing 2 During Civil War', *MEMO: Middle East Monitor*, 29 June 2020, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200629-lebanon-interior-minister-admits-killing-2-during-civil-war/.

502   For the trial, see Nohad Topalian, 'Disappointed with Hariri Case Verdict, Lebanese Accuse Hizbullah of Obstructing Justice', *Al Mashareq*, 14 December 2020, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200629-lebanon-interior-minister-admits-killing-2-during-civil-war/.

503   In March 2022, three more men with ties to Hezbollah were sentenced in absentia for killing Hariri.

Like the photograph of Shartouni, the one of Ayyash seems to have been taken many years ago. In 2020, he was fifty-seven years old, but his face appears to be younger. It would be plausible that it was taken around 2005, at the same time as the Hariri assassination. Therefore, as in the case of Shartouni, it seems that Ayyash's face was also frozen at the very time of the murder he is convicted of committing.

Similar to Shartouni's image outside the court in the Bachir trial, Ayyash's image also sparked controversy, which is observable on social media. The factions supporting Ayyash claimed that he was not guilty and that the court only needed a scapegoat. A tweet defending Ayyash reads as follows:

> It was clear from day one what this one billion dollar show (mostly from Lebanon) was about. They imprisoned innocent people for years, made conflicting accusations & discovered nothing about the bomb, bomber, or vehicle. They needed a scapegoat so they convicted #Salim Ayyash.[504]

Another tweet, whose author is apparently convinced of Ayyash's guilt, reads:

> Say goodbye to #Lebanon Salim Ayyash, found by the special court #STL @STLebanon in The Hauge guilty on multiple counts related to the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri & 21 others in 2005, celebrated in his #Hezbollah hometown Harouf as a 'résistance hero'.[505]

As in the case of Bachir and Shartouni, these tweets show how the image of the counter-hero Ayyash polarises. However, he is not celebrated for having killed Hariri; rather, his guilt is denied and the fairness of the trial is questioned. On the other side, opponents of the banner of Ayyash criticise his celebration in his hometown.

The image of the counter-hero is as controversial as the image of the celebrity martyr because it embodies a counter idea to the celebrity martyrs' dream of what Lebanon should be in the future. The depiction of the counter-hero has parallels to the iconography of martyr posters, which I read as an expression of the honour that the faction producing the banners and posters has for the deeds of the counter-hero. The photographic age of the alleged killer presupposes the picture of the martyr. Like the images of Bachir and Hariri, the images of Shartouni and Ayyash

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504 Cited in Al Jazeera, 'A Banner Celebrating Salim Ayyash, Who Was Convicted of the Assassination of Rafik Hariri, Ignites the Communication Sites in Lebanon', *Al Jazeera*, 20 August 2020, https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2020-08-20-a-banner-celebrating-salim-ayyash--who-was-convicted-of-the-assassination-of-rafik-hariri--ignites-the-communication-sites-in-lebanon.HyZlmddehMv.html (last accessed 14 June 2024; site inactive on 24 October 2024).

505 Cited in ibid.

were frozen in the time of the celebrity martyrs' deaths. This is particularly visible in the case of Shartouni, who, like Bachir, remains visible as a young man on a poster that frames him as a celebrity because he killed a celebrity martyr.

What Makes a Celebrity Martyr?

The equivalent images and speeches accompanying the deaths of Bachir and Hariri in *Nancy* point to the special status of these two men in Lebanon's recent history. They are not only leader martyrs, like Kamal Jumblatt, but their deaths also had severe consequences for the country. Therefore, I termed these two men A-grade celebrity martyrs. In *Nancy*, the posters of Bachir and Hariri appear on all four screens simultaneously, and their images are appropriated as found. Via the textual layer of the play, the underlying image is prevented from striking back and does not turn the images of Bachir and Hariri into a possible homage. Unlike the situation faced by posters of ordinary martyrs, the image production and distribution of celebrity martyrs has not stopped but is still ongoing. The format of their posters is usually not serial but individual and, as in all photographs of martyrs, it is not the aesthetics that primarily matter but the depicted face. Additionally, some elements of their images are reminiscent of those of celebrities.

Bachir and Hariri are situated on the threshold between life and death. Although the celebrity martyrs have ceased to exist physically, they remain alive in images as they continue to represent their parties' respective dreams of the political shape of Lebanon. Post-mortem, these dreams are in the hands of their successors, the images of whom are often juxtaposed with the face of the celebrity martyr. Because of the dream that the celebrity martyr carries, his face evokes more emotions than pictures of ordinary martyrs, as reflected in the text of *Nancy*. These feelings manifested themselves in the showdown of images at the AUB and the punching of the poster at the Arab Book Fair. Additionally—and although this is not part of *Nancy* it is nonetheless relevant—the image of the celebrity martyr provokes further pictures of counter-heroes, who are usually the murderers or alleged killers of celebrity martyrs and whose faces embody a counter-dream.

4.3.4 Fabricated Remembering. Fabricated Forgetting.

In this part I have shown that *Nancy* reflects that the remembrance and oblivion of deaths is nuanced. The fact that celebrity martyrs are on a higher stage of visual memory than ordinary martyrs is addressed in the play as the posters of Bachir and Hariri appear on all four screens simultaneously, with images appropriated as found. Also, the memory of ordinary martyrs is varied, as those who died in combat

Fig. 4.61: SSNP, '8 July the 38th Annual Commemoration of Antuan Saadeh's Martyrdom', 1987, Poster, 46 x 70 cm, ZMA 430, signsofconflict.com.

for their militia are placed on a higher stage of martyrdom than those who died in other ways, as reflected in the Green Group of Hatem and the Blue Group of Lina. Hierarchies of death are emphasised in *Nancy* through the choice of the underlying images of the posters as well as through the inclusion and reduction of elements that are typically found in martyr posters.

Another group of the dead addressed in *Nancy* are those who are forgotten, which are primarily the missing. They died, like the martyrs, under violent circumstances, but posters of the disappeared were never hung on the walls during the *Wars*, which is reflected in the play when the blue monochrome—instead of a martyr poster—appears on the screen in the sequence of Lina's abduction and subsequent killing. Not all deaths are memorialised equally, and there is a hierarchy of remembering and forgetting that is dependent on how the person died, who they were during their lifetime, and how much interest a collective had in keeping their memory alive.

This hierarchy of deaths is also, I would suggest, unconsciously visualised in a poster issued by the SSNP on the thirty-eighth anniversary of Antuan Saadeh's death (*Fig. 4.61*). Saadeh, who was the party's founder and leader martyr and was executed in 1949, is depicted at a significantly larger scale than all other shown faces. The well-known martyrs, most of whom conducted martyrdom operations, such as Muhaidly or Kanaa, are shown in colour, whereas the ordinary martyrs are presented in black and white; the SSNP's missing are, of course, absent. Remarkably, many women appear in colour, which demonstrates that they played an important role in the SSNP's fabrication of martyrdom. In the following part, I will focus on how *Nancy* reflects on the gendered aspect of martyrdom in the posters of the *Wars*.