

reveals the gender roles as well as the post-mortem practice where men perform the role of a fighting martyr who died in battle and women predominantly perform the role of a non-fighting martyr.

Through exaggerated appropriations of the hypermasculine elements of the posters of the *Wars*, as well as through Lina's cross-dressing, *Nancy* caricatures this hypermasculinity and shows on the textual plane that the hero is constructed and does not exist beyond his image. In reality, he is a human being who feels emotions such as fear and love. The hypermasculine format shares parallels with commercial ads; these images aim to convince men to join a militia and to buy a product, respectively. In one of the appropriations of the hypermasculine format that shows Hatem with sunglasses and the holster of a gun (Fig. 3.19) we see Murr Tower in the background, which brings us to the next part, which is about ruins of the *Wars*.

4.5 Premature Historicist: The Martyr Poster and the Ruin as Presents Framed as Past

Martyr posters from the *Wars*, like ruins from the *Wars*, belong not only to the past but also to the present. In this part, I will focus my attention on the depictions of the Holiday Inn and of Murr Tower (Burj al-Murr in Arabic) in the posters of *Nancy*. Both buildings still exist in Beirut's cityscape as iconic remnants of the *Wars* and were sites of martyrdom during the infamous Battle of the Hotels. They also appear in Mroué's play as indicators of this battle.

Below, I will link five posters from *Nancy* that depict the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower to posters of the *Wars* and to the historical events of the Battle of the Hotels. Within this discussion we will see that the stories told in *Nancy* should be understood not as a narration of history but as anecdotes of historical potentialities that could have happened. Also, looking at these five posters in combination points to the fact that when there is a martyr, there is often a counter-martyr, and that shuhada are often surrounded by rumours. Then, I explore the meaning of Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn in contemporary Beirut and argue that these ruins, like celebrity martyr posters, evoke strong emotions. Finally, I suggest that the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower can be understood through Walid Sadek's concept of the 'premature historicist ruin', which 'frames presentness as past'.⁵⁸⁰ The temporality of both buildings is non-linear, as they belong not only to the past but also to the present. This framework of thought can also be applied to the martyr posters, as they, like the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower, render unfinished business past instead of acknowledging the present protraction of the *Wars*.

⁵⁸⁰ Sadek, *Ruin*, 178.

4.5.1 The Holiday Inn and Murr Tower as Locations of Rumour, Historical Potentialities, and Encounters of Martyrs and Counter-Martyrs Before and During the Battle of the Hotels

The very first martyr poster that appears in *Nancy* (Fig. 3.7) shows a photograph of Rabih's face in a circle that partly overlaps an image of Murr Tower. The colour of the background is green ochre. Ahrar logos are placed on the lower left and right, and between them is written 'Tigers. Ahrar Party' in black and '29 August 1975' in white.⁵⁸¹ The poster is accompanied by the following speech by Rabih:

I was killed in the marketplace in Downtown Beirut during clashes with the Palestinians and their Muslim and Leftist allies on August 29, 1975. I was killed in the Sursock souk. [...] I could tell by his clothes: a Morabitun. He shot me before I shot him... [...] He was so scared and shaken that he hardly realised he'd killed me... I must have been his first. (14)

Here, Rabih speaks of himself as a member of Ahrar who was killed in combat by a member of the Morabitoun in Downtown Beirut, which is not far from Murr Tower. Due to his killer's anxiety, Rabih suspects that he was the first person his opponent had ever shot, and this statement also hints at the fact that it is the first death and martyrdom in the whole play.

Clashes, like the one Rabih recounts, had occurred since April 1975 between the Lebanese Front—which consisted of different Christian militias, was led by the Phalange, and was backed by smaller groups, such as Ahrar—and the Lebanese National Movement—which consisted of Lebanese Muslims, various Palestinian factions, and non-religious leftist military groups. These hostilities can be understood as the prelude to the Battle of the Hotels.

Murr Tower also appears in another poster, discussed in 4.4, in which Hatem stands in front of the building (Fig. 3.19). In the bottom left corner, a Morabitoun logo is visible. Above the logo, we read 'The Militant Brother Hatem Imam'; next to the logo, writing in red says 'Martyred in the Beirut Fighting'; and below that, writing in white reads '27 October 1975'.⁵⁸² Due to their height, Murr Tower—then the tallest building in town—and the adjacent hotels in Beirut's Hotel District were attractive locations for surveillance and the positioning of snipers.⁵⁸³ Hatem does not entirely understand this, as becomes clear in the speech accompanying Fig. 3.19:

⁵⁸¹ In Mroué and Toufiq, *Nancy*, 14, we read 21 August 1975. This is a typo; the Arabic writing in the poster clearly indicates 29 August.

⁵⁸² In *ibid.*, the text says December; this is again a typo.

⁵⁸³ Sara Fregonese, 'The Urbicide of Beirut? Geopolitics and the Built Environment in the Lebanese Civil War (1975–76)', *Political Geography* 28 (2009): 314–15.

My first kill was a Phalangist... I killed him in the Sursock souk. [...] My first real battle was the battle for the Murr Tower. I don't know why there was such a fuss over that tower... There was nothing in there; it was a skeleton of a building; an empty shell, with nothing inside to confiscate. [...] In the end [...] we seize control of the tower. In my excitement, I run all the way up to the roof and start shooting [...]. A moment later, I feel this heat in my head: A Phalangist sniper perched on the roof of the Holiday Inn delivers a bullet, and I die on the spot. That was on October 27, 1975—Monday. (14)

Through the inclusion of an image of Murr Tower in both posters, a connection between the two men is established. The speech informs the spectators that it was Hatem who killed Rabih in the summer on Sursock Souk. The fact that Hatem thought he had killed a Phalangist in the events leading to the Battle of the Hotels probably points to the quantitative dominance of the Phalange among the Lebanese Front, so that for adversaries, when killing a Christian, it was most likely that he was a Phalangist.

Hatem here also tells the audience about the beginning of the Battle of the Hotels, which started on 22 October 1975 and lasted until 23 March 1976. On 23 October 1975, the Morabitoun seized control over the unfinished Murr Tower, which is also described as such by Hatem, when he calls it a 'skeleton' and an 'empty shell'. Christian militias entered the Holiday Inn on 27 October, that is, after Murr Tower was occupied by the Morabitoun.⁵⁸⁴ Hence, it is historically unlikely that an actual member of the Morabitoun had been killed by a Christian sniper from the Holiday Inn right after entering Murr Tower: on 23 October, Christian militias were still not in the hotel, and on 27 October, Murr Tower had already been held by the Morabitoun for four days.⁵⁸⁵ Even though Hatem's speech hints at the main factions involved in the Battle of the Hotels and at its important locations—namely, the Lebanese Front in the Holiday Inn and the Lebanese National Movement in Murr Tower—the date he indicates does not match documented historical events. This again emphasises that the play should not be read as a narration of history.

Fighting in the Hotel District repeatedly erupted and subsided until March 1976, when most of the hotels were seized by the Lebanese National Movement, but the Holiday Inn remained a Christian bastion. It ultimately fell in a floor-to-floor battle that lasted from 21 to 23 March.⁵⁸⁶ The seizure of the damaged building is also addressed by Hatem, who says:

⁵⁸⁴ Jureidini, McLaurin, Price, *Military Operations*, 5–6.

⁵⁸⁵ Al Jazeera, 'How the Holiday Inn Became a Symbol of the Lebanese Civil War: War Hotels', *YouTube*, 25:26 min, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DTGFcjRrQ4>.

⁵⁸⁶ Jureidini, McLaurin, Price, *Military Operations*, 6; Fregonese, 'Urbicide of Beirut?', 314–15.

on Sunday, March 12,⁵⁸⁷ 1976, to be exact—we conducted an offensive led by Fatah.... This time the mission was to raid the Holiday Inn. [...] We succeed in taking over the hotel after inflicting a crushing defeat on the Phalangists. The first thing I do, I head straight to the top floor to catch my sniper-killer from last time... On my way up, I am ambushed on the 13th floor: A dead Phalangist lying on the ground suddenly opens fire, wounding me fatally. (15)

Hatem tells the audience that he was killed by a member of the Lebanese Front after entering the captured building. His speech is accompanied by a visual that presents his passing during combat for the Holiday Inn as martyrdom (Fig. 3.20). A circle outlined in red depicts the Holiday Inn embedded in its urban scenery. Three smaller circles show photographs of Hatem, and a red running-man silhouette is visible.

Rabih is also shown with the Holiday Inn in another poster (Fig. 3.8). In this example, he is standing in front of the building on the left-hand side of the image, which corresponds to the poster in Figure 3.7 because of the green, ochre background, the use of black and white for the slogans, the Ahrar logo, and the inclusion of an iconic ruin of the *Wars*. Also, the day of his death, 21 March 1976, is indicated. This date was historically a day of heavy fighting and therefore also a day on which many martyrs were created.⁵⁸⁸ The poster is accompanied by the following anecdote:

The comrades carried me away and put me up in Holiday Inn. They told me to rest there, it was a stronghold, it was safe. Not a month later we come under attack [...]. The battle was a tough one, ranging from floor to floor... I died on the 13th floor. The Palestinians had taken over the hotel and my body was still on the ground when I saw them: The Morabitun mob tooting their victory. As if they were the rightful heroes behind the battle... As if they were the ones who had vanquished us... This made my blood boil... My rifle is still there next to me where it had fallen. [...] I grab it and spring up, landing square on my feet... I empty my clip into the guts of the first guy I run into. I stick him full of holes. In under a second, bullets are raining down on me from all sides. I stumble backwards towards the window... Bullets are whizzing through me and I'm stumbling backwards... Bullets and backwards... Until I crash through the window of the 13th floor and drop dead all the way down. That was on March 12, 1976. (15–16)⁵⁸⁹

587 This is a typo in the script of *Nancy*. It should read '21' instead of '12'.

588 Traboulsi, *History*, 198.

589 The indication of 'March 12', instead of 'March 21', is again a typo in the English script.

Here, Rabih explains that he had killed Hatem again after the Holiday Inn was captured by the Morabitoun, who, as Rabih's speech indicates, were backed by Palestinian military groups, such as Fatah, as mentioned by Hatem. Hatem's martyrdom, the result of being killed by Rabih, is again commemorated by the Morabitoun (Fig. 3.20).

This poster of Hatem appears next to Rabih's (Fig. 3.8) on the screens above the actors. The placement of the posters next to each other points to the fact that martyrs can often be linked to counter-martyrs. This notion becomes clearer if we look at two figures who were said to be involved in the Battle of the Hotels and who seem to be personified by Hatem and Rabih. Specifically, in this reading, Hatem would embody the Morabitoun field commander Omar Mekhdashi and Rabih would embody an infamous Phalange sniper who shot Mekhdashi after the Holiday Inn had been seized.

That Hatem's story resembles Mekhdashi's is emphasised by the image because Hatem's poster (Fig. 3.20) is an appropriation of a Morabitoun poster (Fig. 3.63) that was issued in 1976 to commemorate the men who died when the Holiday Inn was captured. The overall designs of both images are the same; the only notable change is that the portraits of fighters are replaced with photographs of Hatem. On top of the poster from the *Wars*, the headshots and names of the five Morabitoun casualties that the seizure of the Holiday Inn caused are depicted in circles. As in the remake in *Nancy*, they are outlined in red. The circle in the middle in Figure 3.63 is slightly larger than the others and shows Mekhdashi's face, with his name indicated.⁵⁹⁰ The appropriation of this poster seems to be an emphasis of *Nancy*'s text, in which Mekhdashi is not mentioned, however, he, like Hatem, died through sniper fire in the Holiday Inn.

Samer Sabbagh, a Morabitoun fighter who was present when the Holiday Inn was captured, remembers that the sniper who killed Mekhdashi was then thrown from the building by members of the Lebanese National Movement.⁵⁹¹ The stories of a sniper falling from an upper floor of the Holiday Inn are infamous in Beirut. Rabih also mentions this:

590 Jallad does not mention the poster in this context but indicates that five Morabitoun members died when the Holiday Inn was captured ('Beirut's Civil War', 57). Mekhdashi and the Holiday Inn appear in at least one other poster issued by the Morabitoun (Fig. 3.64). This poster dates from 1977 and was published to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the seizure of the Holiday Inn. It shows a drawing of a militiaman of the Morabitoun who is smashing a miniature version of the Holiday Inn with the butt of his rifle. Next to the building, Mekhdashi's face is depicted. Maasri claims that the poster aims to create the impression of the 'other', as it shows the destruction of a 'Western capitalist icon' (Maasri, *Off the Wall*, 105).

591 For the killing of Mekhdashi, see Jallad, 'Beirut's Civil War', 57.

A lot was written on the Holiday Inn battle: stories, legends, some credible, others less credible... But, I can confirm one thing: What I read in the papers about my own death was a hundred per cent true. They wrote: 'One of the fighters was seen plummeting from the 13th floor of the Holiday Inn. The casualty was identified as one of the Ahrar fighters'. (17)

Nancy here hints at the rumours that surround the deaths of the Phalangists in the Holiday Inn. Whether they jumped in a last heroic act to prevent themselves from being killed or were thrown depends on who is telling the story.⁵⁹²

There exist images of corpses that had allegedly been thrown from the upper floors of the Holiday Inn.⁵⁹³ I find in particular the body that is visible in the photograph in *Figure 4.32* strangely intact for one that had been thrown from such a height, although photographer Saleh Rifai claims that the dead man, who was tied by a rope to a vehicle and dragged through the streets, was a sniper thrown from the Holiday Inn.⁵⁹⁴ Also writing on this image, Gregory Buchakjian notes that it is difficult to confirm that it really shows a sniper who has fallen from the Holiday Inn, even if it is labelled as such. He asserts that it is nearly impossible to authenticate this photograph and that the stories of falling snipers remain urban legends that ignite collective imaginations. Since no images of men falling from the Holiday Inn exist, it remains unclear whether someone actually fell from the hotel.⁵⁹⁵ As I have discussed in 4.2, a photographic image cannot establish a truth claim by itself, and the fact that someone says a photograph shows a sniper who has been thrown from the Holiday Inn does not mean that the photograph actually depicts this.

Additionally, *Nancy* adds a layer of confusion to this already ambiguous anecdote, as in the play, the falling militiaman is said to be from Ahrar. I could not find any report that confirmed that a fighter who allegedly fell from the Holiday Inn was from that party. Rather, the falling snipers are usually labelled as Phalangists, if they are mentioned at all.⁵⁹⁶ There are no indications that Ahrar fighters were inside the Holiday Inn. Historical reports rather convey that after Ahrar lost the St. Georges Hotel, which they had occupied, they simply left the Hotel District and therefore also the Battle of the Hotels.⁵⁹⁷

592 Buchakjian, 'Habitats Abandonnés', 27.

593 Jallad, 'Beirut's Civil War', 75.

594 Al Jazeera, 'How the Holiday Inn'.

595 Buchakjian, 'Habitats Abandonnés', 26–27.

596 In *Military Operations*, Jureidini, McLaurin, Price do not mention falling fighters. James M. Markham mentions that two Phalangists were thrown from the Holiday Inn; see 'Beirut Leftists Seize Holiday Inn in Heavy Assault', *New York Times*, 22 March 1976.

597 Jureidini, McLaurin, Price, *Military Operations*, 6; Buchakjian ('Habitats Abandonnés', 114–15) mentions that the Phalange briefly occupied the St. Georges after Ahrar had left and describes in detail how Ahrar left the area by sea.

Although it is unlikely that an Ahrar fighter was inside the hotel, there is still the potentiality that one of the party's militiamen, whose story has not been captured in the existing accounts of the Battle of the Hotels, decided to assist his Phalange allies in fighting when all other Ahrar fighters retreated. In other words, the possibility that the story happened as narrated in *Nancy* remains. At least, there is no proof that it has not taken place as told.

Nonetheless, the narration of an Ahrar martyr in the Holiday Inn, like the previously mentioned inaccuracy regarding historical dates, demonstrates that *Nancy*, while frequently indicating precise dates and days, should not be read as an alternative history to the existing sectarian narratives. This is also confirmed by Fadi Toufiq in the following conversation:

AR: You are very precise with the dates and even the days of the week. For example, there is Monday, October, 27. Sometimes the dates correspond to the actual incidents, and sometimes they do not...

FT: That's a way of ridiculing history and people who are mixing up dates [...]. But that has to do with the situation, because in this kind of history, we have to admit that something is lost in oblivion [...]. So we want to [...] reflect that we are revisiting something as being lost in our oblivion or lost in ignorance. People have a memory. We were presenting, not representing. We were presenting a memory of what had happened [...]. It is kind of a human telling of what has happened, not a scholar, not a historian [...] so this is why.⁵⁹⁸

What is crucial for Toufiq is that the actors of *Nancy* tell memories of ordinary militiamen, albeit that their recollections might not match what actually happened. Also, the urban legend of the Holiday Inn sniper can be understood as a transmission of hearsay. Although there is no proof that an Ahrar fighter was thrown from that building, it might have been a circulating rumour that is narrated in *Nancy*.

The incorrect dates, and also some of the anecdotes told, provoked interesting reactions when the play was staged in Beirut, as Mroué explained:

598 Toufiq, Zoom, 6 May 2021.

When we presented the piece in Beirut, some audience members would correct us during the show, shouting: 'This is not right; the truth is...' I would always thank them by saying, 'Yes, you are right', and then we continued our lines. After the show, some people blamed us for mentioning certain events while omitting others, questioning why we did so. They would tell us what happened from their point of view. As you can see, the story/history alternates depending on the perspective and sociopolitical background of each person. This is why in the introduction of the book [Mroué and Toufiq 2012], I wrote something like: We do not want to write a new history; we do not need another version to be added to the existing versions. Our aim is only to question all versions and express our doubts about our history.⁵⁹⁹

Instead of representing what has been, *Nancy* addresses selective memories that imagine potential histories. They might be real, or fiction, or a mixture of both.

Furthermore, the anecdotal structure of the play is another indication that *Nancy* does not claim to represent history. Tess Takahashi has characterised the function of the anecdote in the work of Hadjithomas/Joreige in a way that can also be applied to *Nancy*:

The anecdote's personal, minor, unofficial status can present potential resistance to official state histories. Because it lacks the supposed rigour and careful evidence of an academic history, the anecdote is fragile and malleable, travelling through time, by word of mouth, based on individual memory and hearsay. While the anecdote can move through cycles of elaboration and across social fields like gossip, however distorted and fictionalised, it carries a grain of emotional truth that can attain the power of cultural myth.⁶⁰⁰

The anecdotes told by the actors in *Nancy* are framed as the personal experiences of the actors, and what they tell us are fragments that can be placed in a bigger historical context, but none of them is strictly representing one of the sectarian histories of the Wars; at the same time, *Nancy* does not sketch another version of history that could exist parallel to the sectarian ones. Additionally, many things the actors tell us cannot be proven to have happened, as the stories of the play are parts of the individual memories of the protagonists or hearsay they have heard in the past and now tell on the stage in the present. These spoken words oscillate between fact and fiction and might include a small part of truth.

For reasons that must remain unclear, Murr Tower does not appear in posters that were issued during the Wars. The inclusion of the Holiday Inn as a site of victory in *Nancy*'s Morabitoun poster (Fig. 3.20) reflects the building's actual use in the

599 Mroué, Zoom, 18 May 2021.

600 Takahashi, 'Material Traces', 191.

posters of the militia (*Figs. 3.63–3.64*). The Holiday Inn is absent from the posters of the Lebanese Front, as that building is a symbol of defeat for them. When also inserted in posters of Rabih dying for Ahrar (*Fig. 3.8*), Nancy expands the depiction of the Holiday Inn beyond its use in the posters of the *Wars*. This alteration could point to the fact that, when contextualised with historical accounts of the Battle of the Hotels, the story of Rabih falling from the Holiday Inn as an Ahrar militiaman cannot be located in these narrations, like the Holiday Inn cannot be located in the posters. Furthermore, this adaption could hint that his story is modelled after the infamous sniper, who may have fallen from the very building next to which Rabih is shown.

The appearance of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower next to the image of the martyr in the five posters of the play discussed above link the stories that Rabih and Hatem are telling and indicate that both actors are narrating the same incidents before and during the Battle of the Hotels, but from rival perspectives. The Lebanese Front's version is embodied by Rabih, and the Lebanese National Movement's version is embodied by Hatem. While Hatem's embodiment of Mekhdashi is evoked through the visual plane but not mentioned in the text, Rabih's embodiment of the sniper is evoked through the textual plane but not visualised.

The fighters meet and kill each other, often in the same locations, and they are consequently remembered as martyrs by their parties. At the same time, historical inconsistencies in both stories point to the fact that not all memories correspond to actual historical events. There are numerous histories of the *Wars*, and the anecdotes told in *Nancy* could potentially have occurred, although no proof exists. The martyr and the rumour, or versions of what has happened, are closely linked, as I have also shown in 4.4 with the rumours regarding Muhaidly and other women who conducted martyrdom operations. Therefore, what *Nancy* is demonstrating here, without siding with anyone or claiming to tell a truth, is that anecdotes about martyrs are often surrounded by rumour.

While other buildings that were sites of struggle during the Battle of the Hotels, such as the Phoenicia Hotel or the St. Georges Hotel, were reconstructed, Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn remain ruins that are laden with meaning in the urban landscape until the present day.⁶⁰¹ They are now relics of the *Wars*, and the ending of *Nancy* alludes to this when a panorama containing Murr Tower appears across all four screens. In the following, I will shed light on the history of both buildings.

⁶⁰¹ There are other famous remnants from the *Wars* in Beirut's urban landscape, such as the Grand Theatre or The Egg.

4.5.2 The Holiday Inn, Murr Tower, and Martyr Posters as Containers of Unfinished Business and Emotions Today

Many artists have dealt with Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn in paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, movies, and installations.⁶⁰² In general, it appears that there is greater interest in depicting Murr Tower. This is also reflected in *Nancy*, where three of the visuals show the Holiday Inn (Figs. 3.8–3.9, 3.20) and six show Murr Tower (Figs. 3.7, 3.16, 3.19, 3.28, 3.40, 3.51). Mroué explained the decision not only to highlight Burj al-Murr, but even to end the play with the tower as follows:

After the Battle of the Hotels in 1976, the Holiday Inn became destroyed and deserted but was never demolished. Since then, it has remained unchanged, standing as a witness to what happened. Burj al-Murr has also stood since the beginning of the civil war in 1975, abandoned and unchanged, erected in the middle of Beirut between east and west at the detraction line, as a monument. During wartime, it served different functions. It became a multifunctional building for militias, a hot-spot for snipers, a prison, a torture site, a place for hiding corpses, a military spot, headquarters for different political parties, mainly the Syrian Army and later the Lebanese Army, and so on. Construction began before the war broke out, intending to make it the tallest tower in the Middle East, symbolizing modernity in the Arab world. Then the war came and stopped everything. The tower is still there, reminding us of our failure. It is said that there is a mass grave underneath it, but nobody wants to talk about it. It holds a violent history within its skeleton, much more than the Holiday Inn holds.⁶⁰³

According to Mroué, Murr Tower was more a location of tragedy and more contested than was the Holiday Inn, which experienced mostly quiet years after the Battle of the Hotels. Armed disputes about the building took place only once, namely,

602 For examples of artistic interpretations of Burj al-Murr, see Melissa Plourde-Khoury, 'Challenging Panopticism Through Representations: Burj al Murr', *Middle Eastern Journal of Culture and Communication* 11 (2018); India Stoughton, 'The Man Who Turned Beirut's Infamous Burj el Murr Into a Fairy Tale', *The National*, 10 June 2019, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/film/the-man-who-turned-beirut-s-infamous-burj-el-murr-into-a-fairy-tale-1.872423>. For examples of artistic reflections of the Holiday Inn, see Buchakjian, 'Habitats Abandonnés'; Naeff, *Precarious Imaginaries*, 94.

603 Mroué, Zoom, 18 May 2021.

after the Israeli invasion in 1982. Murr Tower, on the other hand, was handed over to different factions multiple times after 1976.⁶⁰⁴

The construction of the brutalist-style, forty-storey concrete tower started at a mind-blowing speed in 1974. It is said that one floor was completed every day.⁶⁰⁵ Even after the Battle of the Hotels, the aim was to return to the initial construction plan. As Michel Murr, the owner, optimistically told *An Nahar* newspaper in 1977: 'If the situation continues to improve, the construction of the building will be over in a year's time, I believe. This includes 400 offices, a cinema theater, a luxury restaurant, a commercial center and a landing pad for helicopters'.⁶⁰⁶ Murr's hopes were in vain. Nonetheless, Murr Tower, although never finished, was the tallest building in town.

During the Wars, Burj al-Murr was, as Mroué mentioned, a torture site, a surveillance spot, and a sniper's nest.⁶⁰⁷ After the Wars officially ended, Solidére purchased the tower in 1994, and the lower floors now serve as an army base while the upper floors are abandoned. Its future remains unclear.⁶⁰⁸ According to Melissa Plourde-Khoury, Murr Tower 'was a symbol of Beirut's modernization and prosperity, it is a reminder of the war, a looming cement landmark and a popular icon'.⁶⁰⁹ Naeff similarly points to its pre-war relevance when she writes:

The tallest tower of the city until the mushrooming high rises of the 2000s, this building is charged with symbolic meaning. As a world trade centre to be, the Murr tower symbolizes the pre-war commitment to capitalist modernity as a project that was prematurely and violently aborted.⁶¹⁰

604 Moe-Ali Nayel, 'Beirut's Bullet-Ridden Holiday Inn—A History of Cities in 50 Buildings. Day 28', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/01/beirut-holiday-inn-civil-war-history-cities-50-buildings>. Some newspaper articles give an impression of how contested Murr Tower was. See, for example, Nora Boustany, 'Leftist-Shiite Battles Rage in West Beirut. Syria Vows to Send Troops from Damascus', *Washington Post*, 19 February 1987, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/02/19/leftist-shiite-battles-rage-in-west-beirut/d7d86df5-ba56-4aa6-a49b-b9fc26b9304/>.

605 Plourde-Khoury, 'Challenging Panopticism', 297.

606 Michel Murr in *An Nahar*, quoted in Zaven Kouyoumdjian, *Lebanon Shot Twice* (Beirut: Arab Image Foundation, 2001), 61.

607 Sadek, 'A Surfeit of Victims', 155.

608 Plourde-Khoury, 'Challenging Panopticism', 296–98.

609 Ibid., 298. Elias, on the other hand, does not understand Murr Tower as a typical monument, because it does 'not conform [to] the traditional protocols of the monuments namely to produce symbols that serve either to console viewers or redeem tragic events'. Elias, *Posthumous Images*, 133.

610 Naeff, *Precarious Imaginaries*, 92.

Although Naeff confuses Murr Tower with the never-started project for a world trade centre in Beirut, she is right when she, like Plourde-Khoury, points to the promise of capitalism and modernity that Murr Tower was intended to manifest.

Due to the beginning of the *Wars*, another nuance was added to the building, and today the tower remains a trace of the violence, dominant in the city's urban landscape. This is emphasised by a statement by architect Abdul-Halim Jabr, who still remembers rockets flying from Murr Tower eastward, as he told the now-defunct online newspaper *Daily Star*:

for my generation this is a building that was never used as a proper building. That makes it a huge part of the war, people assign meaning to it, and some who care about the city believe it should be there because it is part of an unresolved conflict.⁶¹¹

Much of this statement could also be applied to the Holiday Inn, which is, like Murr Tower, an unintentional memorial of the *Wars* in Downtown Beirut.

The Holiday Inn was the last and most luxurious hotel completed in Beirut's Hotel District. The twenty-four-storey building was finished in 1974, just before the *Wars* officially started.⁶¹² Like Murr Tower, the Holiday Inn is today used as an army base and its future is unknown.⁶¹³ Both buildings are constant reminders of the *Wars*, as they are the last traces of the Battle of the Hotels, creating a stark contrast to Solidére's surrounding architecture, which Jalal Toufic criticises:

as long as there still are war-damaged buildings in the Central District [...], such buildings will still evoke a counter to the enormous weight of the myriad concrete buildings that are being constructed in the rest of Beirut with no regard for urban planning.⁶¹⁴

611 Venetia Rainey, 'Fate of Beirut's War Ruins Still Unclear', *The Daily Star*, 19 May 2014, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Fate+of+Beirut%27s+war+ruins+still+unclear-ao368524124>.

612 India Stoughton, 'The Scars of War on Lebanon's Holiday Inn', *Al Jazeera*, 30 December 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/12/30/the-scars-of-war-on-lebanons-holiday-inn>.

613 Jallad, 'Beirut's Civil War', 154–55. The Holiday Inn embodied the misty-eyed Golden Age of Lebanon that was not quite so golden given the sectarian and class-related tensions that were brewing under the surface and that sometimes erupted, as in the violence of 1958, which is sometimes referred to as the 'First Lebanese Civil War'. See also Sana Tannoury-Karam, 'Reckoning with the Past: Selected Scenes from the Modern History of Lebanon', in *The Lebanon Uprising of 2019: Voices from the Revolution*, eds. Rima Majed and Jeffery G. Karam (London: I.B. Tauris, 2023), 21.

614 Jalal Toufic, 'Ruins', in *Thinking the Ruin*, eds. Matthew Gumpert and Jalal Toufic (Istanbul: Istanbul Studies Center, 2010), 38.

Toufic seems to acknowledge that these architectural remnants in Downtown Beirut are somehow out-of-place in their urban landscape and therefore act as reminders of the *Wars* and point to the unfinished past. At the same time, Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn have a different status than the many house ruins in Beirut, which I term 'ordinary ruins'. The 'celebrity ruins' status of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower becomes clear when looking at two interventions in these buildings by Jad el Khoury.

In 2015, el Khoury painted doodles of blue characters around the holes created by missiles and bullets on the façade of the Holiday Inn. He highlighted the holes by integrating them into seemingly carefree motifs, which evoked an amusing atmosphere (Fig. 4.74). As el Khoury says, he wanted to show how the *Wars* still shape daily life in Lebanon, and the work was intended to speak about his desire to live happily in the now without the omnipresent overshadowing of the *Wars*.⁶¹⁵ It could be argued that el Khoury, using very simple means and employing a lighthearted visual language, shows how these two times—that is, 1975 to 1990 and today—are not linear but overlap and coexist in his daily life.

While the artistic quality of the doodles is questionable and there is also no aesthetic link between them and the Corbusier-style façade of the Holiday Inn, it is not the work as such that is of interest for the current discussion, but the reactions to it.⁶¹⁶ A 2015 newspaper article by India Stoughton gives an impression of how emotional and controversial the debate was, including the issue of whether it is right to paint directly onto the Holiday Inn. One of her interviewees said, 'When I pass by it, I feel the negative energy. I only like to see positive things, and Jad's doodles are so fluffy and funny and funky'. Buchakjian, on the other hand, exclaimed, 'This is an outrage! An outrage to Beirut, an outrage to memory, an outrage to everything!'⁶¹⁷ While some people were happy about el Khoury's jollification of a remnant of the *Wars*, others were angry about it. Finally, el Khoury's doodles were overpainted with white.

In 2018, el Khoury undertook an intervention on Murr Tower. For ten days, colourful curtains, commonly used in Beirut for closing balconies for protection from the sun, rain, and wind, hung on the building's windows (Fig. 4.75). The wind made the curtains blow and created a dynamic element on the static tower. In doing so, el Khoury says, he aimed to give life to a dead building.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ Beirut Banyan, 'Ep.58 (Audio): Urban Art with Jad El Khoury', *YouTube*, 16 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyB8kzyDFRo>; Jad El Khoury, Zoom conversation with the author, 22 April 2021.

⁶¹⁶ For a critical discussion of the work and whether humour is the right way to approach a building with a heavy past, such as the Holiday Inn, see Sabrina DeTurk, *Street Art in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 56–59.

⁶¹⁷ Stoughton, 'Scars of War'.

⁶¹⁸ Khoury, Zoom, 2021.



Fig. 4.74: Jad el Khoury, *War Piece*, Installation on Holiday Inn, Beirut, 2015.



Fig. 4.75: Jad el Khoury, *Burj al Hawa*, Temporary Installation on Murr Tower, Beirut, 2018, Photograph Elie Abou Jaoudeh.

While this intervention received remarkable media attention and prizes,⁶¹⁹ critical voices were also raised. For example, Sadek claimed that the cheerful aesthetics of the installation are an ornamental reduction that does not match the tragic events that Murr Tower embodies. In Sadek's reading, el Khoury erases or at least ignores the past that is contained and carried by the tower. By making a celebrity ruin of the *Wars* 'merry', el Khoury suppresses the memory of violence and therefore reduces the ongoing *Wars* to a 'bad vibe that can be spooked away'. Sadek further states that el Khoury's installation expels the past into the distance and focuses only on the future as it 'wistfully calls on something better to come'.⁶²⁰ As in his Holiday Inn intervention, el Khoury ignored the heavy weight that surrounds Murr Tower.

Writing about street art more widely, Sabrina DeTurk questions el Khoury's awareness of the buildings' significance in the past and present. She critically notes that she suspects that it is difficult for el Khoury, who was born at the end of the *Wars*, to understand the heavy meaning these ruins have for those who experienced the *Wars*, and that his non-subtle interventions might have come too soon, as the pain is still present. With his 'insistence on transforming the buildings into sites of whimsy and humor he destabilizes, perhaps even destroys, their memorial function, turning the walls into sites of play rather than purpose'.⁶²¹

If we take the ruin as analogous to the martyr, the many house ruins in Beirut would be ordinary ruins, similar to the ordinary martyrs, whereas the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower could be understood as celebrity ruins, similar to celebrity martyrs, such as Bachir or Hariri. As mentioned in 4.3, in comparison with the celebrity martyrs, the ordinary martyrs who died during the *Wars* have a marginal visual presence in town, and the production of their posters ceased at some point. Also, the destruction of ordinary ruins usually goes unnoticed. In contrast, since the end of the *Wars*, public debates have been regularly held on whether the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower should be destroyed.⁶²² These discussions can be linked to el Khoury's doodles on ordinary ruins, such as a building on the ring bridge, which were very similar to those he painted on the Holiday Inn.⁶²³ The fact that there was no public criticism regarding this intervention demonstrates that the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower are not ordinary ruins, like the numerous bullet-ridden houses in Beirut, but celebrity ruins.

619 Jad El Khoury, 'Burj el Hawa', *Nuart* 2 (2019), https://nuartjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/NJ2-1_06-El-Khoury.pdf.

620 Sadek, 'Surfeit of Victims', 155–57.

621 DeTurk, *Street Art*, 59–60.

622 Rainey, 'Beirut's War Ruins'.

623 Beirut's Bright Side, 'Jad el Khoury's Healing Arts', *Beirut's Bright Side*, <https://www.beirutsbright-side.com/jad-el-khourys-healing-arts/>.

There is also a collective emotional sensitivity that surrounds celebrity ruins. Of course, individual emotions are attached to ordinary ruins, just as they are to posters of ordinary martyrs, but these emotions are limited to a small group of people, usually those who used to live in these buildings, whereas the discussion about the future of and interventions on the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower triggered collective sentiments, and people who had never set foot in these buildings expressed their opinions and feelings about them. I understand the collective emotions attached to the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower as the reason why works by other artists dealing with these buildings, such as *Nancy*, did not receive such controversial criticism and media attention as el Khoury's interferences. I believe this is because he did not just represent these buildings; he also intervened on their very surfaces.

Born in 1988, el Khoury, unlike most artists who worked on the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower, did not live through the *Wars*. Thus, he has a greater emotional distance from these buildings than artists who have personally experienced the period of the *Wars*. For him, Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn were always there and unchanging throughout his life. It seems that for people of el Khoury's generation, the untouchability of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower, which is caused by emotions attached to these buildings, is no longer a given, which is why el Khoury aimed for an actual intervention.⁶²⁴

This untouchability also applies to the martyr posters. While it usually triggers no wide criticism to visually reflect on them—examples are *Nancy* and other works by Mroué, such as *Inhabitants* and *Three Posters*—to my knowledge, there have been no artistic interventions on actual on-site martyr posters. The reason might be that emotions are attached to the posters of martyrs, as they are to buildings damaged by the *Wars*. The act of destroying them is perceived as cruel by Jalal Toufic, who writes:

The physical destruction of severely damaged buildings to construct others in their place is sacrilegious [...]. It exhibits the same brutality that was shown during the war. The demolition of many of the ruined buildings of the city center by implosions [...] was war by other means; the war on the traces of the war is part of the traces of the war, hence signals that the war is continuing.⁶²⁵

Also, to destroy or intervene in a poster of a martyr on the spot would be viewed as sacrilegious and brutal, as a scene in Elias Khoury's novel *White Masks* points out, when the protagonist Khalil tears down posters of shuhada and gets arrested for

624 Paola Yacoub intended to exhibit a photograph of the Holiday Inn inside the Holiday Inn in the framework of the Ayloul festival in 2001, but the Syrian Army did not grant her permission. De le Court, *Post-Traumatic Art*, 134–35.

625 Toufic, *Ruins*, 37.

doing so. The militia leader, who had taken him to prison, asked Khalil, 'How could we let the posters of our martyrs, our war heroes, be torn down? You know how precious such pictures are to the relatives and friends of the dead, don't you?'⁶²⁶ In other words, to take the poster down is to commit violence not only against the poster and the physically deceased martyr, but also against living people.

Through their juxtaposition of celebrity ruins and martyrs, the posters in *Nancy* (Figs. 3.7–3.9, 3.19–3.20) seem to draw connections between untouchable elements to which emotions are attached. Considering the ruins, this untouchability is exclusive to celebrity ruins, as many ordinary ruins in Beirut have been destroyed without raising protest action. However, for the martyr posters, this untouchability extends to both the ordinary and the celebrity. Simultaneously, we could interpret the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower as metaphorical martyrs who lost their purposes or lives during the *Wars* and now linger as (un)dead buildings among the living buildings that still have a function. In this sense, the buildings would be analogous to the faces of the dead on the martyr posters, which linger among the living on the walls.

The Holiday Inn and Murr Tower are celebrity ruins to which polysemic emotions are attached. Changes in situ drew a lot of attention to them, and actual interferences on their façades were met with criticism. This makes these two buildings comparable to martyr posters, which also have the capacity to invoke emotions. Once on the wall, they cannot be taken down, as this would be perceived as an assault against the image. As a result, I read Rabil's and Hatem's presence in front of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower in *Nancy* as a link between the characteristics of the celebrity ruin and the martyr poster, as both elicit emotional responses and contain unfinished business from the *Wars*. In particular, Burj al-Murr represents the ill-defined space between then and now.

4.5.3 Premature Historicist Celebrity Ruins

At the end of *Nancy*, the relevance of Murr Tower is highlighted again, as all four actors meet there. In my reading, the building can be understood as 'premature historicist ruin' that belongs not only to the past but also to the present.⁶²⁷ When each actor separately hears about the sectarian clashes at the Beirut Arab University in 2007, each decides to go to Murr Tower, saying the same sentence: 'Given my

⁶²⁶ Khoury, *White Masks*, 206–7.

⁶²⁷ This stands in contrast to the interpretation of Naeff (*Precarious Imaginaries*, 93), who understands Burj al-Murr's appearance in *Nancy* as an admonition—although it remains unclear to me where she locates a pedagogical aspect in the building's appearance. I also do not read the role of Murr Tower in the play like Jallad ('Beirut's Civil War', 134), who suggests that the ruin is a fifth character in the storyline. My reason for this is that, unlike the four actors, Murr Tower neither speaks nor tells anecdotes about the *Wars*.

former experience in combat, I know that the battle for Beirut is as good as won by whoever's the first to control the Tower...' (34–35). Their speeches are accompanied by images of fragments of the urban landscape of Beirut, which, across all four screens, forms a panorama that includes Murr Tower (Fig. 3.54).

The inclusion of the tower at the end of the play functions like a bookend that links with *Nancy*'s opening, where the very first poster of martyrdom also depicts the building (Fig. 3.7). I understand this as a hint that incidents from the years between 1975, the date of issue for Fig. 3.7 in the storyline of the play, and 2007, the end of *Nancy*, are located in the same temporal realm. The building still has meaning in the now, precisely because it acts as a reminder that the business of the Wars is, like the tower itself, unfinished. This is not only because the ex-fighters, who are still alive, immediately return to their war habits by trying to seize the tallest building in town, but also because the sectarian system is still intact and sectarian strife still occurs.

Two Lebanese artists and thinkers, Walid Sadek and Jalal Toufic, have reflected on the ruin.⁶²⁸ Toufic claims in his essay *Ruins* (2003) that houses become ruins by being deserted by their inhabitants and that the building's material destruction is only the manifestation of the ruined character. According to him, this applies when one dwells in the building instead of living inside it, but he does not elaborate further on whether a building can also turn into a ruin when someone has only dwelled in it.⁶²⁹ Sadek links Toufic's thought to the Heideggerian notion of dwelling, which describes a certain peace of existence in a permanent place.⁶³⁰ Taking these reflections into account, neither the Holiday Inn nor Murr Tower would be classified as a ruin, as no one has ever dwelt in these buildings; this is true for Murr Tower because it has never been inhabited, and it is true for the Holiday Inn because the guests only came for short stays.

Given their prominence as highly damaged buildings in the city centre, however, I find it difficult not to think of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower as ruins. Another characteristic of the ruin that Toufic identifies and that is important for my discussion is its non-linear temporality; ruins 'exist in a past that is artificial,

628 I have consciously refrained from using ruin theory that stems from Europe—for example, texts by Walter Benjamin—because there are matching theories that originate from Beirut.

629 Toufic, 'Ruins', 35. Also, Fares Chalabi, in 'The Present Against the Past and the Future: Reclaiming the Present as a Strategy of Cultural Resistance in Post War Lebanon', *Journal for the Critique of Science, Imagination, and New Anthropology* (2022), 123, reads Toufic's 'Ruins' as saying that a place turns into ruin when it is abandoned by its inhabitants. However, when I asked Toufic about this at a talk at the Arab Image Foundation on 20 June 2022, he said this could be a marker of a ruin but that it does not necessarily have to be.

630 Sadek, *Ruin*, 186–87.

one that does not belong to history, was not gradually produced by it'.⁶³¹ In other words, ruins are placed in an anachronistic realm in which a past is artificially constructed.

This temporal layer is also considered by Sadek in his essay *Waiting for the Ruin to Come* (2016). He suggests that the *Ruin to Come* as a mental figure needs to be constructed by the 'overlivers' of the *Wars*, who, by sharing their 'excessive knowledge' that still weighs on them, build the ruin. The *Ruin to Come* is still not built in Lebanon, and the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower are surely not categorisable in this way. Sadek, in my reading, would term both buildings as 'premature historicist' ruins, as he observes that:

The catastrophe that may inhabit the present and bind it tight to the crushing weight of its unyielding presentness is efficiently framed as a ruin; it is swiftly evicted from the present. [...] Proximity made distant is precisely what the historicist ruin accomplishes.⁶³²

The premature historicist evacuates 'the present of what remains unfinished in the past'.⁶³³ In other words, Sadek claims that the premature historicist ruin fools us into believing that a present catastrophe is already past. He sees the reason for this as follows:

The framing of wrecks as ruins is crucial for maintaining a political investment in the narrativization of present negativities as an already-settled past. [...] The historicist ruin is therefore a temporal marker of a present made past. [...] The present wreck when framed as a ruin, is no longer the site of catastrophe. Rather, it merely dons its form.⁶³⁴

If we think of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower only as relics of the Battle of the Hotels, as remnants of bygone disasters, we miss the fact that these two ruins, like all other wreckage from the *Wars*, belong not only to the past but also to the present. This is because the problems that were present in 1990, when the *Wars* officially ended, are still present today in the protracted now. Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn, like the *Wars*, remain unfinished negativities. Although the *Wars* are framed as past, they are present, as is evidenced by the shooting at the Arab University in January 2007, with which *Nancy* ends. This potential for protracted and inherited violence was also still present in Lebanon at the time of writing, as is confirmed

⁶³¹ Toufic, 'Ruins', 37.

⁶³² Sadek, *Ruin*, 176.

⁶³³ Ibid., 186

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 176.

by the street fights in the Tayyouneh area of 14 October 2021, which caused seven casualties. Beirut still has the potential to be turned into a war zone.

I would suggest applying Sadek's thoughts not only to wreckage but also to the posters of martyrs of the *Wars*.⁶³⁵ Expelling the posters into the realm of the past enhances the illusion that they belong to a settled catastrophe. These pictures try to fool us into believing that they point to the past, even though they also belong to the now because the conflicts are not over.

This overlapping and the impossibility of distinguishing between the past and present is also tangible in *Memory Box* by Hadjithomas/Joreige. In one scene, set during the *Wars*, people are dancing at a party, when suddenly the electricity cuts, which was also a very common occurrence in Beirut during the time of writing and researching this book. In another scene in the movie, also set during the *Wars*, someone complains about the devaluation of the Lebanese Lira, which caused the audience in the Beirut cinema I was sitting in to laugh. By the time I watched the film in 2022, the Lira had devalued to a point that was worse than ever. Past and present are mixing and mingling.

In my understanding, through the injection of life that the posters experience in *Nancy*—namely, via the depiction of the contemporary bodies of the actors who are placed in front of the premature historicist ruins of the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower—the play comments on the non-linearity of time of the martyr posters of the *Wars*. The play seems to hint at the presentness of the posters, the unresolv-edness of the *Wars*, and the constant making of new martyrs. In the present, we witness not only the continuation of the wreckage of the *Wars*, but also the creation of new wreckage, such as that caused by the Beirut port explosion.

Moreover, the faces of the dead that I encountered on the walls during the time of writing—those who died in the thawra, or in the explosion on 4 August—are directly linked to the *Wars*. It is still not disclosed, and probably never will be, why the explosion happened. But the fact that the sectarian system stored tonnes of ammonium nitrate in the port and therefore in the middle of the city, right next to residential buildings, makes the sectarian system and the people who govern Lebanon to blame for the blast. These people, such as Nabih Berri, who was the speaker of parliament, Michel Aoun, who was president, or Samir Geagea, who was the leader of the LF on 4 August 2020, are the same men who are responsible for the *Wars*, in which they actively participated. Also, the martyrs from the thawra were ultimately created by the sectarian system, as without its existence, the thawra would not have taken place. In short, the thawra and 4 August are a result of the sectarian system, which is not past.

If wreckage like Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn are rendered past, it is impos-sible to address negativities of the present, since awareness that they also belong to the realm of the now can never be achieved.

635 Sadek applies his thoughts to stamps. See *ibid.*, 177–78.

4.5.4 Martyr Posters and Celebrity Ruins as Markers of a Presentness Framed as Past

In this part, I showed that the inclusion of Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn in *Nancy* serves multiple functions. First, the buildings link the stories that Rabih and Hatem tell the audience about the Battle of the Hotels. However, the memories of the protagonists do not exactly match the historical events of the battle, and *Nancy* should not be read as another history of the *Wars*.

Second, *Nancy* injects time into the posters of the *Wars* by including the contemporary bodies of the actors, by adding Murr Tower, and by expanding the use of the Holiday Inn to the defeated parties of the Battle of the Hotels. Like the martyr posters, the premature historicist celebrity ruins of Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn are not limited to the realm of the past but indicate the unfinished business of the *Wars*, which is stretching into the present. They are temporal markers of presentness made past, as both point to negativities in the now.

This non-closure manifests itself through rumours, ambiguous stories, and potential histories that surround not only the buildings but also the martyrs and counter-martyrs, as I have demonstrated with the Holiday Inn sniper and Mekhdashi. Until the present day, polysemic emotions are attached to both wreckage and posters, which turn them into untouchable elements, as illustrated by the interventions of el Khoury at the Holiday Inn and Murr Tower, which drew remarkable attention and criticism. The notion of anachronistic time is also central to the next part, in which I will introduce the aspect of the future and the undead ghost in relation to the martyr.

4.6 The Time Is Out of Joint: The Martyr as a Spectral Ghost

Sectarian martyrs can be understood as spectral ghosts, since they are simultaneously absent and present, visible and invisible, dead and alive. The figure of the ghost has often been addressed by researchers when writing about images and artworks that deal with martyrs. Alam, for example, claims that 'martyrs are undead beings that haunt the living population'⁶³⁶ and Gade has linked *Nancy* to Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. According to Gade, the actors are located on the thresholds between life and death and presence and absence because they repeatedly tell the audience that they die as martyrs but return to life shortly after.⁶³⁷

Responding to their texts, I will first focus on the ghostliness of the martyrs on the walls in Lebanon. Here, I will follow Bachir Saade's convincing strain of thought, which claims that Hezbollah martyrs can be linked to the figure of the

⁶³⁶ Alam, 'Undead Martyrs', 577.

⁶³⁷ Gade, 'Learning to Live', 341.